









# S E R M O N S

DELIVERED IN

## I N D I A

DURING THE

COURSE OF THE PRIMARY VISITATION.

M.DCCC.LXXIV—VI.

BY

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

61

M.DCCC.XXXVII.

THE following Sermons are thrown into four divisions. The first relates to the chief doctrines of Christianity—the second, to the application of those doctrines to the human heart—the next, to some of their effects on the Christian life and conduct—the last, to the consummation towards which Christianity is, as we trust, advancing in the conversion of the world.

The connection of these divisions and of the several sermons with each other is but slight. The object in arranging them in a series, was merely to enable the author to insert some remarks, on the Tendency of Christianity to promote in the highest measure, the present and future happiness of mankind. He also had the desire of suggesting some topics for advice and consolation to those who reside at a distance from Christian society, surrounded by Heathens and Mohammedans.

The several friends who have solicited the publication of different sermons during the course of the Visitation, will here find their wishes, to the best of the Author's power, attended to.

The Honorable Judges of the Supreme Court of Madras will recognize the first discourse as that which they requested might be published at a meeting of the Madras Diocesan Society for Propagating the Gospel.

My Reverend Brethren of the same Presidency—now, alas, mourning with all India the death of their beloved and honored Bishop—will meet in the volume all the other sermons, I believe, which I delivered there, and which at a meeting of the Venerable Archdeacon and Clergy on the eve of my departure, they solicited me to publish. A most imperfect but affectionate memorial to the lamented Bishop Corrie is now added.

I have placed also in the series the discourses delivered before the Right Honorable the Governor, the Venerable the Archdeacon, and the Clergy and Society of the Presidency of Bombay ; as well as those preached at Colombo and other places in that Archdeaconry, and in the Straits of Malacca.

The two discourses, likewise, which the Clergy and

Gentry at the station of Meerut requested at my hands are inserted ; and those delivered on occasion of the consecration of the Churches of Kurnaul and Delhi—the latter was privately printed and circulated amongst the residents of that station.

Lastly, the Gentry assembled on the Hills at Simla will at once see that I have complied with their earnest solicitation. Indeed to their favourable opinion the publication as it now stands is owing. Their affectionate and unceasing kindness I can never forget.

## TO ALL THESE FRIENDS

I MORE ESPECIALLY DEDICATE THIS LITTLE VOLUME.

I trust it may be accepted also as a slight, but most sincere testimony of regard by my beloved and honored Brethren, generally, both Clergy and Laity, throughout the Dioceses of India, whether I have been able to visit them or not.

Indeed I employed with the greater pleasure, the leisure of a residence on the Hills during the last hot season, in preparing the Volume, because it would enable me to visit, as it were, those numerous scattered stations where I might be unable personally to penetrate, and to recall to mind in others those views

of the great mystery of Redemption, with its holy tendencies, which my rapid progress would not allow me sufficiently to unfold.

May I also indulge the hope that such as still remember me amongst my several former flocks in England, and especially in the numerous districts in the parish of **ST. MARY, ISLINGTON**, may accept this publication as a token of affectionate remembrance, and as a memorial of what I preached amongst them during more than thirty years preceding my appointment to my present fearful and responsible station.

I should bely the best feelings of my heart if I closed this address without humbly offering up my thanksgivings to Almighty God for the preservation of life and health for nearly five years since I quitted England ; and without entreating of all my Christian Brethren, both here and at home, their continued and fervent supplications on my behalf, that increasing measures of wisdom and grace may be vouchsafed me during my probably very short remaining period of service ; and that I may at length “ finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

*Calcutta,*  
*April 3d, 1837.*

**ADVERTISEMENT TO THE THIRD EDITION**

**A new Edition of this little Volume having been called for, I have only to commend it now again to the Blessing of Almighty God, and to the candor of my Reverend Brethren and their flocks.**

*Simla,*

*August 10th, 1840.*



# CONTENTS.

## General Subject.

THE GENERAL BENEFICIAL TENDENCIES OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE HIGHEST INTERESTS, TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL, OF MAN.

## First Division.

SOME OF THE BENEFICIAL TENDENCIES OF CHRISTIANITY AS CONNECTED WITH ITS CHIEF DOCTRINES.

### SERMON I.

*The most obvious and general character of Redemption.*

	PAGE.
LUKE iv. 18, 19.—The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. to preach the acceptable year of the Lord . . . . .	1

### SERMON II.

*The excellency of the Mystery of the Gospel.*

EPHESIANS iii. 8--10.—Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach amongst the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. . . . .	21
---	----

### SERMON III.

*The connection of holy love to our fellow-creatures with the great doctrine of atonement.*

	PAGE.
EPHESIANS v. 2.—Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor . . . . .	40

### SERMON IV.

*The universal call to repentance.*

ACTS xvii. 30, 31.—And the times of this ignorance God winked at : but now commandeth all men every where to repent ; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead . . . . .	57
--	----

### SERMON V.

*The encouragement to the contrite sinner to come to Christ.*

JOHN vi. 37.—Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out . . . . .	78
--	----

### SERMON VI.

*The Holy Ghost, the great Comforter.*

JOHN xiv. 26.—But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you . . . . .	95
--	----

## Second Division.

**BENEFICIAL TENDENCIES OF CHRISTIANITY WITH REFERENCE TO THE APPLICATION OF ITS DOCTRINES TO THE HUMAN HEART.**

### SERMON VII.

*The danger of false conceptions of the character of God.*

PSALM l. 21.—These things hast thou done, and I kept silence ; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself ; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes . . . . .	114
--	-----

## SERMON VIII.

*The reasonableness of the demand which Christianity makes upon man.*

PAGE.

ROMANS xii. 1.—I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service . . . . . 134

## SERMON IX.

*Some marks of distinction between the true and false methods of learning Christ.*

EPHESIANS iv. 20.—But ye have not so learned Christ . . . 152

## SERMON X.

*The glory and majesty of God, the source of comfort to the contrite in heart.*

ISAIAH lvii. 15.—For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones . . . 169

## SERMON XI.

*The Christian paradox of strength derived from weakness.*

2 CORINTHIANS xii. 9.—Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . . . 186

## SERMON XII.

*The commanding motive which Christianity employs to produce a devoted and benevolent life.*

2 CORINTHIANS v. 14, 15.— For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again . . . . . 205

### Third Division.

#### BENEFICIAL TENDENCIES OF CHRISTIANITY AS APPARENT IN THE EFFECTS OF ITS DOCTRINES ON THE CONDUCT AND LIFE OF ITS TRUE DISCIPLES.

##### SERMON XIII.

###### *Prayer.*

PAGE.

LUKE xi. 11—13.—If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him . . . . . 218

##### SERMON XIV.

###### *The Holy Scriptures interpreted by affliction.*

PSALM cxix. 71.—It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes . . . . . 237

##### SERMON XV.

###### *The Dangers of the World.*

JOHN xvii. 15.—I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world; but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil . . . . . 256

##### SERMON XVI.

###### *False Philosophy exposed.*

COLOSSIANS ii. 8—10.—Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him . . . . . 274

##### SERMON XVII.

###### *Consolation under the loss of Friends.*

I THESSALONIANS iv. 13, 14.—But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him . . . . . 292

## SERMON XVIII.

*The memory strengthened for retaining religious truth.*

	PAGE.
1 CORINTHIANS XV. 1, 2.—Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.	313

### Fourth Division.

BENEFICIAL TENDENCIES OF CHRISTIANITY AS CONNECTED WITH ITS ADVANCE TOWARDS ITS ULTIMATE CONSUMMATION—THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

## SERMON XIX.

*The Commission given by our Lord.*

MATTHEW xxviii. 18—20.—And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.	331
---	-----

## SERMON XX.

*The progress of the gospel illustrated by the process of vegetation.*

ISAIAH lxi. 11.—For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations	357
---	-----

## SERMON XXI.

*The conquest of truth over the fortresses of the human heart.*

2 CORINTHIANS X. 4, 5.—For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ	378
--	-----

# SERMON XXII.

*The guilt of being ashamed of Christ.*

PAGE.

MARK viii. 38.—Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation ; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels . . 399

# SERMON XXIII.

*Comfort communicated to the Church by the means of the consolations afforded to ministers.*

CORINTHIANS i. 3, 4.—Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort ; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God . . . . . 417

# SERMON XXIV.

*Feeble Churches encouraged to keep Christ's word.*

REVELATION iii. 7, 8.—And to the Angel of the Church in Philadelphia write ; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth, I know thy works : behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it ; For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name . . . . . 440

# SERMON XXV.

*The apostle's act of prayer and adoration with reference to the ultimate accomplishment of redemption.*

EPHESIANS iii. 14—21.—For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and

height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us ; to him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. . . . . 467

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## A P P E N D I X.

### SERMON XXVI.

*Occasioned by the death of Daniel Corrie, D. D., late Lord Bishop of Madras.*

HEBREWS xiii. 7—9.—Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God : whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation : Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. . . . . 493







# S E R M O N S.

## S E R M O N I.

LUKE IV. 18, 19.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. .

NOTHING is more important in estimating any moral or religious design, than to trace out its general tendencies. This has always been a favourite study with contemplative and pious minds. They dwell not so much on immediate appearances or partial difficulties, as on the bearings of a system upon the whole, under a variety of circumstances, after a long series of years, and when acting against more or fewer impediments.

Christianity has never declined any candid inquiries of this class. She quits not, indeed, her direct evidences. These remain the firm pillars of her faith, whether her internal excellency be at first discerned or not. But as her direct evidences would be received with more attention, if the beneficial tendency

of the entire Revelation on the immediate as well as remote interests of mankind were more fully recognized, she assents to the suggestion. She stands forth with all the marks of benevolent design. She exhibits the impress of God, and her adaptation to the state and wants of man. She presents the universal religion. A thousand minute objections have no force, in the midst of her actual good effects and her benevolent tendencies. Her mysteries of course, remain in many respects beyond our comprehension—which is only supposing us to be finite creatures—but as these mysteries have the most direct bearing, as we shall hereafter see, on all the beneficial ends of the gospel, the belief of them for these purposes, on the authority of our Almighty Creator, is one of the purest exercises of right reason. And indeed as these very mysteries involve a stupendous display of Divine love in the recovery of man from a state of guilt and misery, they augment, instead of obscuring, the benevolent character of the whole religion.

To delineate, then, in a series of discourses, some of the chief features of Christianity in this view;<sup>1</sup> in her mysteries—in the application of them to the human heart<sup>2</sup>—and in their effects on the Christian life and conduct<sup>3</sup>—and to describe the consummation towards which Christianity is, as we trust, advancing in the conversion of the world,<sup>4</sup> is my present design. With which I shall connect as I go on, the references to the general beneficial tendencies of our divine Religion, and some suggestions for the guidance and

<sup>1</sup> Sermons I to VI.

<sup>2</sup> Sermons VII to XII.

<sup>3</sup> Sermons XIII to XX.

<sup>4</sup> Sermons XXI to the end.

consolation of those who reside in Heathen and Mohammedan lands.

On entering upon THE FIRST DIVISION of our whole subject, we propose to consider the most obvious and general character of the gospel as apparent in our Lord's discourse delivered in the synagogue of Nazareth. No one can read the words of my text without exclaiming, This religion must be from God—an impression which will be confirmed, whether we consider the first promulgation of Christianity ; or its subsequent progress ; or the principles and advances towards a wider dissemination which are now at work.

I. The remarkable words before us refer to the Mosaical institution of the fiftieth year, " the Jubilee," as it was termed ; " the year of release," " the acceptable year." " Ye shall proclaim liberty throughout all the land," said the Lord by Moses, " the fiftieth year"—" in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land"—" it shall be a jubilee unto you"—" and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his land"—" ye shall not oppress one another."

Accordingly, spiritual deliverance, rescue from guilt, sorrow, and moral bondage ; and the restitution of our lost heavenly heritage, are the grand blessings of the gospel, proclaimed by our Lord.

The general description of these benefits is contained in the first branch of the description, " He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor ;" that is, to declare the glad tidings of salvation to the great mass of mankind, to that vast population which had lain

almost entirely neglected and despised by all preceding teachers. The heathen philosophers had little or nothing to communicate, valuable to man ; and that little they confined to the higher orders of society. But our Lord introduced a benevolent and universal dispensation. Nineteen-twentieths of the human race first came into consideration at his call. He opened the door of grace to the immense multitude. He began by pouring light into the mind of man, of all men, of the poor more especially.

He sounded the silver trumpet, if we may so speak, in allusion to those blown in the jubilee,<sup>5</sup> and made known the good news of one God and Father, the Maker, Benefactor, and righteous Governor of all—and one only—the infinite Potentate, the most just, holy, true, merciful, and eternal God.

He blew the trumpet again, and revealed the one equitable, undeviating rule of moral duty, the holy, wise and good law of this supreme Legislator.

Again it sounded, and the glad news of a Saviour and Redeemer for man a sinner, in the person of the only-begotten Son of God and by the grace of the Holy Ghost, re-echoed through the world.

Once more was it heard, and universal offers and invitations of mercy were proclaimed, by an order of men appointed as its heralds, to every heir of guilt and sorrow.

This was the gospel indeed, glad tidings “to the poor”—they were level to all capacities, they met the case of the uninstructed and ignorant, they came down to the lowest depths of poverty and vice. They tended

<sup>5</sup> The trumpets were of silver. Numb. x. 2.

to raise and ennoble man, without taking him out of his proper sphere, or filling him with conceit ; which no other system but Christianity ever did. And they are all the consequence and expansion of the one fundamental blessing of the forgiveness of sins by the sacrifice of the Son of God.

With this first and general feature of the spiritual jubilee, the other parts of the description entirely agree—indeed they are details and effects of it; opening further the peculiar tenderness of the gospel; “He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised;” and in this way to “preach the acceptable year”—the jubilee—“of the Lord.”

This graphically paints the condition of the poor already spoken of, as those who have “the gospel preached to them.”

The allusion probably is to the captive Jew released by the trump of jubilee. There he lay in prison; his poverty his greatest source of woe; his heart dejected and broken with his melancholy situation; his dark prison-house depriving him of the blessings of sight; his fetters grinding and bruising his limbs; and no hope distinct enough before him to cheer his aching heart.

Or, we may apply the language more generally to any captive—such as poor king Zedekiah, who was first cast into prison, then his sons were slain in his sight, his eyes were next put out, after this, fetters and chains were thrown upon him, and lastly he was carried captive to Babylon.\*

\* 2 Kings xxv. 2 Chron. xxxvi.

A lively, though mournful, picture this of the spiritual state of mankind, and especially of the mass of the poor, at the coming of Christ; and of its state now, so far as the gospel has not been duly received.

The effects and tendencies of idolatry and false religions are before us. Ignorance, vice, oppression, fraud, misery are openly generated by them. "The earth," so far as their influence extends, is still "filled," as it was of old, "with violence." The corruption of man unchecked by the light of truth and the stern rules of distributive justice, yea aggravated by the examples of false deities, flows on in a turbid stream, overwhelming all the barriers of truth and equity; exalting violence and power into the seat of right; extenuating the grossest sensuality; and making a selfishness and cunning, too debasing to be conceived, the principles of human conduct: whilst the mass of men are trodden upon, despised; the unnatural division of castes exclude from social advantages nine-tenths of the population; the one-half of the human family are degraded to be the slaves, instead of the gentle companions, of the other; and cruelty and lust scatter their victims all around.

Rome and Greece of old, in their most polished periods, were no exemptions from this description. St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians were written at the zenith of their elegance, refinement, success in the arts. Nor are any of the nations, who are still without Christianity, in a better state at this moment. No rules of virtue, no doctrine of forgiveness, no teachers to guide into the way of peace, no order of men for the instruction and comfort of the poor, no sacred interval after each six days' toil for religious

worship and repose, no symptoms apparent in any quarter of recovery. Men lay at the coming of Christ, and they lie now, captives, so to speak, broken-hearted, blind, bruised, miserable, forgotten.

• But in Christ is deliverance. The jubilee of the world, with all its consequent blessings, was proclaimed at his birth. He himself first placed the silver trumpet, as it were, to his mouth, in the synagogue of Galilee, when he cited the prophecy of the text, and declared, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

The poor thus first heard the gospel from the lips of Christ. The apostles followed with the same tidings. The captives of Satan and lust, who lay dejected and bruised and wounded, as in misery and iron; and who groaned in vain for a jubilee of which the distant rumours in the tradition of Natural Religion scarcely fell upon their ear, started at the voice of mercy and came forth; the power and bondage of sin were broken; the current of evil passions and habits, whether of heathenism or a pharisaical form of the Jewish religion, was stemmed; a “new heart was given to man, and a new spirit was put within him;” he began to walk in moral liberty; his broken spirit, now awakened to a perception of internal miseries, was healed and pacified by the virtue of the blood of Christ and of the consoling grace of the Holy Ghost. By the same act of mercy, the recovery of sight was vouchsafed to him, blind and ignorant of spiritual things; he saw the light of Christ; the wounds and bruises of his imprisoned state were assuaged; a balm was poured into his wounds; the goadings of passion ceased; the



miseries of disappointed lust, the fretfulness of discontent—the galling agitations of the soul unpardoned and unreconciled to God—the fretting, carking corodings of a disturbed conscience were all mollified ; and consolation followed “ the acceptable year of the Lord.”

With the general communication of these blessings to different nations, the jubilee of the world began. The tendencies of the gospel soon appeared ; the great period of restoration evidently commenced ; the time was fulfilled, so long foretold and prefigured by the Mosaical law. Twelve humble, unlettered apostles (with no powers but truth and the miraculous aids of their Master) received the trumpet from the hands of Christ, and blew it with holy intrepidity in the hearing of their fellow creatures all over the world.

Thousands welcomed the glad tidings. “ The anointing of the Spirit ” flowed down from “ Christ the Head,” to the members of his mystical body ; his miraculous and sanctifying influences were vouchsafed ; “ repentance unto life ” was bestowed ; the new religion spread far and wide. Persecutions arose from those who obstinately adhered, whether Jews or Gentiles, to their superstitions and idolatries ; but greater and greater multitudes embraced the doctrine. In three centuries the aspect of the moral world was changed. “ The gods of the heathen were famished out of their places.” Many thousands even of the Jews welcomed “ the acceptable year.” The idolatry of the masters of the world was abolished. A Christian emperor avowed on the throne of the Cæsars the doctrine of the cross ; and Christ was every where acknowledged as “ all in all.”

In the meantime, the moral elevation of the converts, their holy lives, their purity, their meekness, their humbleness of mind, their love to each other, their cheerfulness under persecutions, their peaceful carriage, their loyalty to their civil rulers, their forgiveness of injuries, their love to their enemies, were confessed by all; and the apostate emperor of the fourth century acknowledged the beneficial character of the religion, by enjoining on his gentile priests the imitation of the despised Christians.

Let us proceed to consider,

*II. The character of Christianity in its progress, since the time of its first establishment.*

For its beneficial tendency has been gradually unfolding itself ever since, amidst all the impediments and interruptions which it has had to encounter. Like a peaceful river, it has flowed with a copious, though gentle stream, which sufficiently marks its course amidst the wickedness and vice of men and the consequent judgments from time to time inflicted by Almighty God: just as the science of medicine displays a tendency to the universal health of mankind, though disease and death, partly from human vices and partly from Divine punishments, continue their triumphs.

This innate virtue of Christianity has been, and is, derived from the matchless character of the blessed Saviour who founded it in his death and sacrifice, from the grace of God's Holy Spirit attending its administration, and from the whole tenor and bearings of its blessings, duties, and effects.

For four or five centuries the gospel followed the

progress of population throughout the known world, and raised the heathen nations, as they received it, in the scale of knowledge, peace, prosperity, the arts, riches, power, happiness, influence.

Wherever Christianity reached, it put forth its effects both direct and remote.

The individuals delivered by its direct effects from guilt, misery, and bondage, and brought into the moral light and liberty of the gospel, were almost unnumbered. These shed a salutary influence around them far beyond the circle of their immediate action. Remote effects were thus produced. Christianity by these means imperceptibly set at work in the mass of society, new principles, which have ever since been extending themselves. It began to mollify, and has gone on mollifying the hardened features of human society. It has abolished at once, wherever it has come, the more cruel and disgusting habits of heathenism; and it has waged war with every other evil which it could not immediately dislodge.

Its holy Sabbath is set up in every Christian community—the most beneficial, as the most ancient, of all institutions. This one feature speaks its benignant character. Man released for a seventh portion of his time from the yoke of labour; man elevated to an intellectual, religious, immortal being, after each six days' interval, is a witness to the divine benevolence of Christianity.

In like manner, an order of men set apart for the instruction and comfort of all classes, and especially the poor, hospitals raised for the sick and aged, the religious education of the young, the institution of Christian

marriage, consequent domestic purity and love, the elevation of the female sex, the diligence, independence, and self-respect, without pride, which Christianity inculcates; the importance it attaches to the milder virtues; its integrity and public spirit; the security of person and property, the equal jurisprudence, the truth and faithfulness, the sanctity of treaties, the peaceful intercommunity of nations which it enjoins, are all unequivocal proofs of its highly beneficial tendency. Whilst the mitigation of the horrors of warfare, especially as regards prisoners and the abolition of slavery, is not less manifest.

All these principles, and a thousand habits flowing from them, were planted, as seeds, at the promulgation of the gospel, and continued to propagate themselves widely during the first ages of the Christian era.

If you ask what so lamentably stopped the progress of these blessings during the period of the dark ages. If you inquire, wherefore the discourse of our Lord in the text was not still acted upon; wherefore, in the nineteenth century, five-sixths of the human family are in Heathen or Mohammedan darkness and captivity; whilst so large a proportion of the Christian nations have lost much of the purity, and therefore of the beneficial effects, of Christianity? I answer, that the corruptions of Christian doctrines and precepts, and the righteous judgments of God in consequence, were the main impediments to the wider diffusion of that saving truth, which Christians then no longer held themselves, and had no adequate zeal to propagate.

The sixth and seventh centuries witnessed the accu-

mulation of those errors and superstitions which tinged it even earlier, but had not yet neutralized its virtue.

In proportion as the trumpet of the spiritual jubilee in the obedience unto death of the Son of God and the sanctifying grace of his Spirit, was silent, sympathy and tenderness for the mass of mankind were forgotten, the poor were uninstructed, the captives of ignorance and sin were left in their chains ; whilst superstition and tyranny, under the Christian name, mocked their woe.

Two things marked the decay. In opposition to Divine knowledge, the inspired Bible, as the fountain of truth, was superseded by the traditions of men. In opposition to spiritual freedom, a presumptuous claim to ecclesiastical authority, beside and above the real rule of that authority, the holy Scriptures, bound on men's necks an iron yoke.

What followed ? God, affronted and provoked, gave up the Christian nations to " the strong delusion " and fearful impositions of the Eastern and Western apostacies. These, however different in other views, concurred in suppressing the holy Scriptures and in rivetting on the souls of men the chains of ignorance and sin ; Mohammedanism opposing the Deity, Popery the mediation of our Lord.

At the blessed Reformation of religion, however, in the sixteenth century, the tendencies of genuine Christianity were again demonstrated to be as beneficial as at its first promulgation. The silver trumpet was again sounded in the heart of the Western Church. The name of Christ as the only spiritual Deliverer

was again proclaimed. The Bible was translated, circulated, honoured, appealed to as the one source of truth. The meekness and gentleness of Christianity and its especial regard to the poor, were again asserted. The jubilee of the world was once more proclaimed, as in the text; and half Christendom—our own country amongst the number—received the joyful sound.

As the Protestant nations have acquired strength and planted their colonies amongst the Heathen and Mohammedan nations, compassion for man has filled their breasts; the Word of God has been translated into almost every tongue; and the messengers of grace despatched to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation amongst the bond-slaves of idolatry and delusion.

III. We proceed, then, lastly, to trace the *principles and advances towards a wider dissemination of Christianity which are now apparently at work.*

For “the acceptable year of the Lord” was never, perhaps, so well understood and recognized in its main features, as in the present day. Its spirit was never so deeply imbibed. Its precepts of compassion and tenderness to captive man, were never so much acted upon. Whenever the two extraordinary impediments to which I have alluded, shall be removed, there is nothing to prevent Christianity from once again having “free course and being glorified” throughout the world. The gospel, once purified amongst nominal Christians, would soon resume its pristine charity and zeal; and, accompanied with the richer graces of the Holy Spirit, would diffuse itself widely amongst the nations.

So far as the Protestant communities, indeed, have begun to act more on genuine Christian principles, the preparations and advances towards a wider diffusion of the gospel are not difficult to be traced.

1. Consider the "multitudes which no man can number," who were once captives to sin and Satan like others, but who have heard, and are now hearing, "the joyful sound, and walking in the light of God's countenance." Every such individual is a propagator of the blessing. He is led by gratitude, he is obliged by duty, he is "constrained by the love of Christ," he is urged by brotherly compassion, to make known the deliverance he has received. Christianity has an internal principle of diffusion within itself. Like benevolence, it exists only in imparting happiness. Let individual Christians be multiplied, and you multiply these diffusers of the gospel.

Such a process is going on, more rapidly than ever, in all parts of Christendom, as we humbly trust. England, France, Holland, Switzerland, Sweden, Prussia, Austria, Poland, Russia are sounding—though some of them faintly—yet are sounding, the "silver trumpet."

2. The Christian nations are the only highly civilized and powerful ones; the only nations raised by their religion to degrees of prosperity and social happiness previously unknown; the only nations encircled by the confidence of the Heathen and Mohammedan people, the objects of their admiration and love. And amongst these nations our own is distinguished, both by the purity of her religion, and the prodigious empire entrusted to her hands by Almighty God, among the teeming population of Eastern Asia.

3. The governors of mankind are also compelled more and more to acknowledge the beneficial tendency of Christianity ; and are protecting from injury and molestation the heralds of the healing message.

There are two considerations which authorise the hope that the kings of the earth will, as they unquestionably ought, more decisively promote the diffusion of the acceptable news of the gospel. The one is the mild and peaceful character of Christianity in civil society, as it is becoming more and more prominent. It is all light and purity and equity and moral freedom. It breathes deliverance to the captive in every sense of the word. It is in its grandest features the reign of mercy, pardon, peace, salvation ; and in its minutest ramifications the angel of compassion and love.

The other remark is that it meddles not with particular forms of civil polity, shuns and prohibits all factious and violent innovations, goes to the support of "the powers that be" in each state ; and directs men to "pray for kings and all that are in authority, that under them we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

This union in Christianity of a spirit of truth and purity going to the removal of every evil, whether in kings or people ; with a gentle, loyal demeanour, which disturbs not the peace of human societies, stamps it for a divine religion, and ensures for it, in proportion as it becomes known, the increased support of governors and rulers.

4. Consider further, the multiplication of Christian colonists of various classes in all parts of the heathen



world, who stand ready, as religion becomes more pure and vigorous in their own hearts, to aid in disseminating the blessing to others.

5. The spirit of inquiry, also, after Western usages, learning, and religion, which has of late been awakened in the native mind throughout the East, is an indication of good not to be overlooked.

6. This is to be connected with the decrepid state of the Heathen and Mohammedan religions—they lie helpless; their foundations are undermined by the mere lapse of time and progress of science; they are out of date. They were designed for a dark age, and are incapable of standing before an enlightened one. All seems preparing for men's gradual deliverance from their thralldom.

7. The powerful influence of general knowledge, diffused by various means is, also, beginning to tell upon the native mind—the public press, schools, colleges, medical classes, arts, sciences, commerce, agriculture, libraries, &c.

8. The concurrence of so many principles and advances of Christianity at the same period raises the momentum of the whole. It is not one thing, but many. The renewed vigour of religion amongst her own followers, the state of mind in the idolatrous and Mohammedan nations, and the more favourable regard of governors, will bring on rapidly the rescue of the peoples of the earth, whenever the Divine grace shall impregnate with life these preparations.

9. Nor should delays, impediments, persecutions, and even some scandals, discourage our hopes. A tendency is not the less real because of obstructions.

Christianity has ever worked its way, like a fountain, through superincumbent weights.

Such, then, is the obvious character of the gospel in its most general aspect, whether we consider its rise, its progress, or its present state. For eighteen centuries it has been bending one way, showing one and only one main tendency—towards the deliverance and happiness of man both in body and soul.

Contrast with this the manifest tendency of idolatry and all false religions. What has Hindooism done for three thousand years? What Mohammedanism for more than twelve hundred? Suppose the whole world covered with either of these forms of religion, what would be the miserable effects? But suppose it filled in every part with pure Christianity, and no imagination can estimate aright the happiness, peace, purity, righteousness, holy influence which would follow.

We shall have to trace the same beneficial bearing of revelation in all the details of it which are to occupy our subsequent discourses; but suffice it now,

In application, first to urge on you the importance of *viewing Christianity in its simplicity, in order to catch its genuine tendency*. Separate it from admixtures. Abstract its essence. Lay aside the additions and incrustations of men. Remove from your view for a moment even its primitive and necessary creeds and forms of discipline—such as those of our own and other apostolical Churches. Take it as it was exhibited in the character, and described in the doctrines, of our Lord

and his Apostles ; and you will more clearly see its beneficial operation. Men are bewildered by a thousand things being represented as flowing from Christianity, which have merely co-existed with it, or arisen from the judgment and opinions of man. Christianity did not occasion or create the evil in the world. No ; it found it there. Whether it be received as a revelation from God or not, the misery and blindness of man exist the same ; the fall of man is the same ; the violence of human passions the same. Mark then the gentle, holy current of Christianity, as she flows through the world, opposing all evil, undoing every yoke, speaking pardon to guilty, and freedom to captive, man ; laying down the doctrine of the atonement of Christ as the foundation of hope ; and dispensing the aids of the Holy Spirit to enable man to build upon it for eternity.

But, further, *realise the blessed tendencies of religion for yourselves, by admitting it into your own hearts.* Feel your own captivity ; be broken in heart for sin ; acknowledge your wounded and bruised spiritual state. Admit your natural blindness. See in the description of the captive, your own picture. Go to the bottom of the dissatisfaction and unhappiness which every human being is conscious of ; and trace it to a fallen nature, apostacy from God, unbelief, rebellion, separation from the fountain of bliss.

The jubilee of the gospel will then be a joyful sound to you. Listen to its silver voice. Pray for that rescue which the Son of God died to procure. Rely humbly on his atonement. Implore his Holy Spirit to break the bands of sin, to restore your sight,

to heal your wounded heart, and bring you out of the dark prison-house of Satan and sin. You will thus become a witness to the blessed tendencies of Christianity.

On the other hand, if any who hear the glad tidings, turn from them in unbelief ; if they accept not the deliverance, but go on in their degrading bondage, love their idols and lusts, and resolve to follow them still, they must be reminded of that “ day of vengeance of our God” of which the prophet speaks in the words following those which our Lord quoted in the text. There is no other alternative. Mercy rejected will aggravate our previous woe. Now then welcome the jubilee of grace, and implore pardon and peace from Christ, the only source of both.

Lastly, *Exemplify in your temper and conduct the holy character of Christianity more and more.* Carry your religion with you wherever you go. Guard against worldliness on the one hand, and mere human philosophy and science, on the other. Maintain the meek, gentle deportment of a true Christian. Follow Christ. He not only taught the true religion ; he not only died as a sacrifice for sin ; but he was what he taught ; he EMBODIED his precepts in his own life. Imitate HIM, and you will best demonstrate the beneficial character of his gospel. You have all rules reduced to one easy precept, BE LIKE TO CHRIST.

Do not dwell on this or that objection raised against Revelation. Do not allow particular difficulties to harass your mind. Stand on broad ground. Here is a religion supported by direct evidences of so

irrefragable a nature, that men venture all their worldly interests on testimony far less secure. Here is a religion whose internal texture abounds with proofs of a benevolent design. Here is a religion whose mysteries are the means of healing. Here is a religion whose obvious tendency for eighteen hundred years has been to "peace on earth and good-will towards men." Here is a religion whose whole impress is concentrated in the matchless innocence and loveliness of its founder. Truth prints holiness; and holiness is happiness.

Venture eternity then upon this blessed gospel. Such a religion cannot but be from God, because it resembles him, leads to him, and centres in him. Plant your foot here, and you are safe for ever. Propagate this religion, and you are propagating light, truth, love, moral elevation, purity, the seeds of all happiness here and the preparations of endless peace hereafter.

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## S E R M O N II.

### EPHESIANS iii. 8—10.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.

IN considering the most obvious and general tendency of the gospel as impressed on our Lord's discourse at Nazareth, many references were made to the doctrine of redemption. The mystery involved in this great doctrine we now proceed, in the next place, to consider; with the purpose of illustrating from the excellency of it the benevolent bearings of Christianity.

In estimating the dignity and value of the gospel, we may not unnaturally inquire,—What blessings it contains in itself—what circumstances of discovery and unexpected relief it involves—and what prudence and contrivance the whole of it displays, in the judgment of the most exalted beings. To which questions we are directed to answer, in the words of the apostle, that the blessings themselves, which this mystery reveals, are the unsearchable riches of Christ—that in its circumstances it throws open a benefit hidden from ages and generations—whilst in respect of wisdom and

prudence, to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places is made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.

I. *The blessings themselves which this mystery makes known* are described by the apostle as "The unsearchable riches of Christ." The import of this figurative expression is easily gathered from similar passages in the same inspired writer. "We have redemption through his blood," saith our apostle in his first chapter, "even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," where the same figure of riches or treasure denotes the abundant grace and goodness of God in the remission of sins. In the second chapter we read, "But God who is rich in mercy, according to the great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ; that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." Here the expression signifies the immense mercy of God in communicating spiritual life to those who had been dead in trespasses and sins. Again, St. Paul speaks of "the riches of the glory of the inheritance in the saints," thereby denoting the unutterable felicity of the heavenly state.

But the term is yet more unfolded, as embracing all the preceding points, when the same apostle thus describes the ends of our Lord's humiliation; "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Indeed, the import of all these passages, and many more, is included

in the brief, but striking expression, where comparing his own external sufferings with the blessings he was the means of communicating, St. Paul says of himself and his fellow apostles, "As poor, yet making many rich."

The term, therefore, in the text is fixed. It denotes the spiritual benefits of the redemption of Christ ; pardon and acceptance through faith in his blood, regeneration and holiness by the grace of his Spirit, the hope of a heavenly inheritance purchased by his death and promised to all those who believe in him and obey him—the three blessings these which characterise the gospel, justification, sanctification, eternal life.

These benefits are by a familiar image, termed riches, because they supply all the most pressing wants of man, they satisfy all his highest desires, they administer spiritually and really those aids and that felicity which riches do, or are supposed to do, in an external manner.

Having thus ascertained the fundamental idea, the additional epithet, "Unsearchable," must import that no power of man can trace out fully the abundance of all the various blessings of Christ's redemption. They are like a mine of untold wealth, an ocean of undiscovered extent. The holy Scriptures accordingly speak, not only of the benefits of Christ as riches, but as "the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge," as "the pearl of great price," as "the treasure hid in a field," as "the unspeakable gift" of the immense love of God.

Indeed, if we reflect only for an instant on the impoverished, guilty state in which man lay ; on the painful and humiliating sufferings of our Lord by



which we were redeemed ; on the depth of his abasement in taking upon him our nature that he might become a sacrifice for us ; on the extent of the love which dictated the enterprise ; on the height of glory to which we are to be elevated, and the unspeakably fatal consequences of the condemnation which our sins deserved, we must acknowledge that such blessings as those of redemption are an unfathomable abyss, where we may trace out continually new wonders, and can discover no boundaries, no termination, no adequate measures of comparison.

But the propriety of this language can only be felt by each individual inquirer, as he rightly views that ruined and fallen state of man to which it corresponds and for which it provides. The blessings of Christ are properly called “riches,” “unsearchable riches,” because man is by nature and practice so wretched and poor ; because he has lost by sin all the moral excellencies with which he was endowed at his creation ; because he has been stripped of the treasures of Divine knowledge, of divine love, of moral uprightness, of Divine favour and grace with which he was blessed in his original state of purity ; and because he is wandering in darkness, error, misery, vice, apostacy from God—far from happiness and heaven.

It is this view of the state of moral and spiritual poverty in which we lie as sinners, which enables us to discern the incredible riches of the grace of Christ in becoming incarnate and dying a sacrifice upon the cross for us.

If we take only a transient view of sin—as too many do ; and as we all once did—if we feel lightly its guilt,

its malignity, its just desert ; if we see little of the holiness of God and the terrors of his violated law, we cannot enter into the force of the apostle's language. We are not in a position to behold "the glory of the only-begotten of the Father," either in "his grace or truth." It is not in the constitution of the human mind to comprehend such forcible expressions, without having first some preparatory knowledge. We may utter the words, "unsearchable riches of Christ," as we may utter any other, but they will excite no adequate idea in our minds, they will not convey the apostle's meaning, they will appear tinged with extravagance as used in the present day ; and they will at length be evaded and explained away, and some modern and weaker phrases substituted for them.

We must see and feel our own spiritual destitution and danger, in order to discern the "unsearchable riches" of a deliverance from them. We shall then, and then only, understand that those riches are truly and emphatically deserving of the name which can supply such wants as ours. We shall thus discover the propriety, the more than propriety, the beauty of the image. We shall thus stand in the right point of light for viewing this lovely delineation and picture of redemption ; that is, we shall contemplate it from the position of our ruined and accountable state, of our vast powers and responsibilities, the awfulness of the wrath which we have provoked, and the eternity of woe which awaited us.

We shall in this way gradually learn to form something of a just judgment on the subject. We shall perceive that the blessings of Christ not only deserve

the title of "riches," "unsearchable riches," but are the only things which merit the name—that they are different and superior to all human and perishable treasures, however over-valued and extolled; of another order, procured at other 'sacrifices, reaching to ends never contemplated in the case of human wealth, of an abundance and excellency quite their own.

Human riches are earthly and temporal at the best; limited in their supply, uncertain in their bearing upon our happiness; often the source of ruin, and always of danger to the possessor—soon counted up, soon searched out, soon exhausted; at no time essential to our well-being; and diminishing from every largess to which they are exposed. And man must leave them at last at the stroke of death, which they can neither teach us to evade or overcome.

But the riches of Christ are, like himself, divine in their nature and inexhaustible in their abundance. They suffice for all in all ages and under all circumstances. They are indispensable to human happiness. They bless in the highest sense every child of man that receives of them, and in the proportion that he receives of them. They leave the divine possessor in no respect poorer, whatever he bestows. They are capable of being dispensed to all the millions of the human family in every period; each receiving the whole, as it were, as to his own perception of blessedness, and yet each leaving to all others, the treasure undiminished, unexhausted, new, permanent, eternal.

Such being the excellency of the mystery of the gospel, as to the blessings which it reveals, let us proceed to point out,

II. *The surprising discovery which is made in the throwing open of its benefits to mankind.* “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, saith the apostle in the text, “is this grace given, that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”

In the communication, then, of the blessings of this mystery to mankind, a secret is discovered: a purpose long hidden is displayed; the charm of novelty and unexpectedness is added to benefits in themselves so invaluable. The participation or fellowship in them is a fellowship in a mystery buried, like precious ore in the mine, during unnumbered ages—the field containing it unexplored—the treasures hidden; thousands from age to age travelling over the surface and never suspecting its concealed riches.

Such a topic as this may have been less interesting to us, when we formerly read in our native land the glowing description of the apostle, from the familiarity with which the earliest associations of our minds were interwoven with Christianity. But now that we are surrounded with a Heathen and Mohammedan population, we are in circumstances to follow out the full emphasis of the inspired language. The mystery, on which ever side we view it, will appear full of wonder.

1. For if we consider *the place*, so to speak, *where the secret was hidden*, it was no other than the mind of God; “which was hid in God;” deposited, concealed in the Almighty’s designs; laid up in the coun-

sels of Omnipotence ; hidden in no other place, a part of the secret and unknown things which lay in the bosom of “ the only Potentate.”

2. If we reflect, again, on *the length of time during which it was concealed*, the mystery will rise in importance. “ The works of the Lord are great,” saith the late learned Bishop Hurd, “ and sought out of all them that have pleasure therein ; but which of these works is so stupendous, or carries the enraptured mind to so high an original, as that which respects the redemption by Christ Jesus ? Man was produced in time, and stationed on this earth at the distance of no more years than our chronology can reckon up ; who can go back to that moment when the Godhead sat in council on the dispensations of grace by the gospel ; on “ the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.” Inspired language labours, we see, in setting forth the extent of these dispensations.”

3. We may notice, further, *the immediate relation of this concealed scheme with the eternal Word* ; “ which lay hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ ” —by that divine Saviour who “ made the worlds ;” and “ without whom was not any thing made that was made ;” to whom angels and men were at first in harmonious and cheerful subjection, as the great Creator of them all ; and who is again, according to this mystery, to be the bond of their eternal union, as either redeemed, or established in felicity, by his mediatorial grace and power.

4. But we should especially observe here, that, in order to set forth more clearly the wonderful dis-

covery, *the apostle speaks of himself in the comparison, in the lowest terms of abasement*—even as John Baptist did, when contrasting himself with our Lord. “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach amongst the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” The apostle depresses himself, that he may exalt the greatness of the discovery; the ambassador sinks into nothing, that the glory of his Prince may alone shine forth. He commits a kind of solecism in language; he frames a new word to which no translation can do justice. He is not content with saying, as in other places, that he is “the least of the apostles,” “the chief of sinners,” “one born out of due time,” “not meet to be called an apostle,” but after he has descended to the lowest point, he goes down still lower, as it were, and declares, not only that “he is the least,” but, “less than the least, of all saints”—compared with the exalted favour and grace of having the disclosure of such a mystery to proclaim to the gentiles.

The greatest of the apostles, he who had been in the third heavens, he who had stood during a long life in the foremost rank of benefactors to mankind, he who had “laboured more abundantly than all” his fellow apostles, and had suffered incredible injuries, losses, imprisonments and perils for the sake of Christ, is unable to sink low enough in his own view, as contrasted with the lofty mystery committed to his care.

His afflictions, his sorrows, his privations, he thinks nothing of; therein he glories; by them he becomes

like to his suffering Master; over them he nobly triumphs by the love of Christ. He is only studious to magnify the grace of God, which from one who had been a "blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious," and who was still conscious of "the law of his members" and the imperfection of his best services, raised up the messenger and preacher of Christ among the gentiles.

It is thus that every minister of religion, and especially in heathen lands, should exalt the mystery of the gospel by depressing himself. He can only display the unsearchable riches of Christ, as he sinks in his own view; and retires, that the glory of his Master may fill the whole field of vision. And this he should ever labour to do more and more. He is to "preach, not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and himself the people's servant for Jesus' sake." And the more he considers the blessings of the mystery of Christ and the surprising discovery made in the communication of them to the gentiles, the more should he magnify the grace of God, which could take him,—“less than the least of all saints,”—and employ him as an instrument in diffusing this greatest and most stupendous of benefits.

But this leads us to notice,

*III. The divine contrivance and wisdom which the highest and purest beings contemplate in the development of the mystery of Christ; "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."*

What a sublime spectacle! the Church thrown open to the world; the indigent and perishing nations

receiving the unsearchable treasures of Christ, according to a settled but hidden plan, an object of contemplation to the celestial world !—The glorious orders of angels turning away their faces from the meaner pursuits of mortals, the fortunes of empires, the enterprises of conquest, to fix their curiosity upon the Church ; to trace out there, and no where else, the various, the many-coloured, (for so the word probably means, in allusion to the beauteous colours of the rainbow,) the “ manifold wisdom of God.”

Angels have been interested in all the parts of human history. When man was first created, these “ sons of God shouted for joy.” At his fall, angels were placed with flaming swords to interdict the way to “ the tree of life.” During every different dispensation of the Church, angels drew matter for wonder from all the variegated displays of the Divine wisdom. But when God began to “ speak unto us, in these last days, by his Son,” and the “ riches” of Christ were poured out without distinction upon a perishing world, then, and not before, to “ all the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (terms which are designed to elevate our ideas of the number and glory and felicity of these exalted beings, and of the mystery which they contemplate) “ was made known by the Church,” not one kind of wisdom merely, but “ the manifold wisdom of God ; ” a surprising and beautifully varied display of contrivance, forethought, adaptation, beneficence ; which, after being demonstrated in one form, assumed another and more glorious one ; reflecting in each the perfections of the wisdom and prudence of the almighty Framer and Architect of the whole.



In what respects the Divine wisdom is chiefly contemplated by them, we scarcely presume to say. We may observe, however, that all the ascriptions made to the Almighty in the New Testament, of infinite and altogether peculiar wisdom, are founded on the dispensations of redemption. It is on this, and no other occasion, that he is termed "The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God." It is on this, and no other occasion, that St. Paul says, "To God only wise be glory;" and St. Jude, "To the only wise God our Saviour be dominion and glory." Whilst in the very epistle from which our text is taken, the apostle declares, not only that all "is done according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;" but that he "therein abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." And in another epistle he thus sums up the whole of this doctrine, and contrasts it with the petty and erroneous conjectures of men, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to nought; but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the worlds unto our glory."

1. We may perhaps, however, venture to suppose that much of this heavenly wisdom is discerned *in the mysterious person of our Lord*, constituted the Mediator of the ruined world; his incarnation, his birth, his epiphany, his doctrine, his miracles, his sufferings, his resurrection, his kingdom, his victory over the powers of darkness, his ascension; the union of the divine and human nature in his person, and the harmony of all the moral attributes of Deity in his vicarious sacrifice and grace.

2. It is possible also—for we speak with reverence on matters not explicitly revealed—that *the succession of the various dispensations of the Divine covenant*, during the course of four thousand years, from the fall to the full development of the gospel, may have fixed their admiration. What subjects of wonder are the advances of light, the opening buds of prophecy, the lives and deaths of patriarchs and prophets and kings, the types and ceremonies of the emblematical economy, the traits of the future Saviour's person and sacrifice more and more unfolded ; the messenger also sent before his face, and the miraculous events of the incarnation !

3. *The weakness of the persons employed* in the first promulgation of the gospel, and its subsequent diffusion to the present hour, compared with the difficulties they have to meet with, the glorious nature of the mystery they develop, and the success which attends their labours, may be also supposed to be another topic of astonishment. For God chose at first, and, generally speaking, chooses still, “ the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things that are despised ; yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are. That no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord.”

4. May we not further conjecture without improbability, that *the surprising system of means which God has erected in the Church, and which he carries on in the events of his moral government in the world*, in subserviency to this great mystery of redemption, may be a topic of adoration and intense curiosity.

In the Church, His inspired word ; the sabbath ; the public worship of his name, the preaching of the gospel, the sacraments ; divers orders of ministers, their public and private instructions ; religious societies, books, missions. And all these in concurrence with the voice of conscience in man ; his ignorance, his responsibility, the aids of the Holy Spirit, the alarms of guilt, the anticipations of judgment.

In the world, the passions of men restrained, obstacles removed or imposed, all events turned to one great result, often unknown to the agents, and contrary to their purposes : though in a manner that leaves unimpaired their responsibility. “How worthy is it,” says a living author, “of all admiration, that, although able to effect all things immediately by his fiat, he ever makes use of means, that his wisdom may be made known to his rational creatures.”<sup>1</sup>

5. Lastly, we may conceive that *the glorious consummation of all these means and dispensations*, and the progress of things towards that consummation, through various scenes, with different measures of success—retarded at some times, quickened and animated at others—engages their deepest attention ; that they are “looking for and hastening unto” that full development of the mystery of “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” which all the prophecies concur to promise at “the latter days.”

But we pause. For who can pursue fully such a subject ? Let us rather, in a way of personal application,

<sup>1</sup> J. J. Gurney.

*Learn to esteem these unsearchable riches aright as respects ourselves, and our own spiritual benefit.*

Every thing in Christianity is practical. Every thing should touch the conscience. When the apostle urges these topics of grandeur upon his Ephesian converts, it is to raise their conceptions individually, of the blessings of the mystery of Christ, and advance their final salvation.

Do you then, my brethren, take, in any degree, the view of the excellency of the gospel which St. Paul presents to us in the text, as respects your own personal judgment, feelings, and conduct? Do you feel, in some measure, your own spiritual poverty, misery, guilt, destitution, as transgressors from the womb, as fallen and corrupt and rebellious creatures? Do the blessings of remission of sins, justification, the influences of the Holy Ghost, spiritual life, hope of an eternal inheritance, appear to you as “unsearchable riches?” Do you regard the mystery now thrown open, as a blessing which appertains to yourselves—gentiles as we all originally were—and as raising us up above those who have not as yet been equally favored? Do you study in the spiritual theatre of the Church, the “manifold wisdom of God?” Do you account it your highest prudence to trace out the divine prudence therein? Do you, with angels and archangels, bow before the mystery of the cross of Christ, and adore it as the most illustrious display of “the power of God, and the wisdom of God?”

If any before me have hitherto passed their lives without discerning these essential truths, let me entreat them to begin the inquiry ere “they are hidden

from their eyes." Let them consider the ingratitude of which they have been too long guilty towards the munificence of the most glorious God in redemption. And let them remember that the exalted sympathy testified by apostles and prophets, by angels and principalities and powers, in the development of the riches of Christ, will be the measure of their delinquency, who "despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering;" who are not "rich towards God;" but are content to go on in the wilful and deplorable poverty of an unpardoned, unrenewed, hopeless state. It is no slight blessing you despise. It is no ordinary discovery you overlook. It is no inferior instance of wisdom and contrivance, undeserving intellectual beings, which you pass by. But the mightiest blessings of the deepest mystery of the infinite wisdom of the eternal God. Awake, then, to the folly of your past conduct. If you have any esteem for what is valuable; if you have any admiration for what have been long hidden; if you have any desire to understand what is replete with infinite skill, seek the "riches of Christ" for yourselves.

When you have done this, you will learn *to aid in diffusing the knowledge of them amongst your impoverished and perishing fellow creatures.* The glory of Christianity reflects some rays upon all the instruments which it designs to employ. Nothing should discourage us in the propagation of the gospel by every discreet and well considered means.

If old prejudices are again disseminated on the danger of making known the name of Christ in India,

oppose to it the beneficial tendency of the religion, which the very term, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," imports.

If the abandoned and oft-refuted objection be started anew, that every nation has a right to its own religion, tell the objector that the mystery of the riches of Christ hidden from ages and generations, is now thrown open for the enrichment of the world. Tell him that if he refuses the gospel to the Heathen and Mohammedans, because they have what some are pleased to term, religions of their own; he should much more refuse them the discoveries in medicine, the improvements in agriculture, the aids of a pure jurisprudence, all the inventions of civilized life, because forsooth they have something bearing the names of these things, of their own.

Or, if prejudices arising from a general contempt for missions and for the converts which they have gained, be insinuated, oppose to them the admiration which the wisdom, the manifold wisdom of God, displayed therein, excites in the loftiest and purest intelligences.

But I dismiss such exhausted and untenable objections. My text is of itself sufficient to suggest the honour, the dignity, the happiness, the grace and favour involved in being in any way, an instrument in such an exalted work. The spirit of the text will lead us, like the apostle, to count no labour so really benevolent, so really dignified, so nearly resembling the employment of angels, as the dispensing the vast treasures of the gospel amidst the spiritual poverty of mankind.

Nor doth this high estimate of the grandeur of our work, whether as ministers or people, militate against

that humility of heart which Christianity ever combines with it. On the contrary, the loftier and more arduous the work, the deeper should be our conviction of our unworthiness and unfitness to be engaged in it. We should desire to say with the apostle (we cannot use his words with the emphasis and truth which he employed them, because we want his degree of self-knowledge, spirituality of affection, and lowliness of mind) but with some approach to his feelings, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach," or aid others in preaching, "among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

This union of faith and humility ; this magnifying of the gospel and depressing ourselves is what will best tend both to throw into full view the beneficial tendency of the mystery of the gospel, and to ensure the blessing of God on our efforts. The grandeur and importance of the Christian revelation will thus gradually make its way, under the conduct of its divine Author, in the Eastern world in these latter ages, as it did in the Western in the early centuries. In his own time and manner will the ever-blessed God "pour out of his Spirit upon all flesh ;" the prodigious glory of the gospel will be displayed in its native lustre ; the riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ, will be duly appreciated ; the "knowledge of the mystery among the gentiles, which is Christ in them the hope of glory," will be diffused ; and "the manifold wisdom of God," which the "principalities and powers in heavenly places" now contemplate, will be increasingly discerned by the universal Church ; and will attract more and more its

admiration, its gratitude, its praise, first here on earth ; and then, “ when the mystery of God shall be finished ” in that upper and brighter world, where, “ with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven,” we shall sing, in other strains than we can now acquire, “ Hallelujah to him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever ! ”



## SERMON III.

### EPHESIANS V. 2.

Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

THE great doctrine of the atonement is the topic which next demands our attention; in the development of which, if we can show, not only that the wonderful fact of the sacrifice of the Son of God breathes benevolence to our fallen race—which is too obvious to be called in question—but that the reception of the benefit is uniformly productive of love and good will to our fellow-creatures, the tendency of the mysteries of Christianity will appear yet more conspicuously beneficial.

Let us then, endeavour to point out the connection of holy love to our fellow-creatures with this characteristic blessing of Christianity.

I. In opening the primary Christian truth of the atonement of our Lord, we must, first, call your attention to *the state of man which required this act of divine mercy*. For man's sinful, guilty condition is supposed. "You hath he quickened," says the apostle in the commencement of the second chapter of our epistle, "who were dead in trespasses and sins;" this was the

moral condemnation and ruin in which man lay: "wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others." Mark, I entreat you, the comprehensive expression, "we all;" not the Ephesians only who had lately been converted from heathenism to Christianity, but "we all," Jew and Gentile, pharisee and philosopher, idolater and nominal worshipper of the true God; "we all" were thus "dead" to God; "we all" were thus "walking after the course of this world; "we all" were "children of disobedience." And then in order to show that this description was not to be confined to the particular enormities of the Pagan, or the superstitions and persecutions of the Jewish unbeliever, but was common to every human being in his fallen state, the apostle adds, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind"—the two grand divisions of sin, intellectual and corporeal; the vices of the affections and the life; which together constitute the death in sin of which he had before spoken; and which terminated in the fearful consequence of their being "by nature children of wrath" one as well as the other.

Such is the condition of man. The first principles of Christianity are the responsibility and guilt of man, the wrath of God, the sentence of his holy law, the impossibility of escape except some atonement be made. For "all have sinned and come short of the glory of

God." Till this is felt and acknowledged, nothing can be done in gaining the heart of man to accept the remedy.

2. Of that remedy *the source is undeserved mercy, benevolence, love to man*, "Christ hath loved us," saith the apostle in the text, "and hath given himself for us." This is the cause of the atonement made by our Lord. He came from heaven to earth out of pure love to us miserable sinners. "Christ loved the Church," is the language of the apostle in his fifth Chapter, "and gave himself for it." "To him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood," is the ascription of glory to Christ in the Apocalypse. There was no motive in our divine Lord to his sacrifice but his own voluntary susception of our cause, his philanthropy, his compassion towards man. "Herein is love," saith the beloved disciple, "not that we loved God, but that he loved us." "We love him, because he first loved us."

The love of Christ is the subject of the adoration of angels. This love was the impelling cause of his dying in our stead. Its rise, its exercise, its objects, its effects, are unsearchable. In human affairs we estimate the value of a benefit, more by the motive than by its abstract amount. Even the smallest gifts are highly prized, if they proceed from an affectionate heart. In the case before us, never was love so pure, so undeserved, so free, so abundant, so costly, as that of our Lord Christ. But this remark is not made in order to compensate for the smallness of the benefit; for,

3. *The matter of the atonement, the price paid, was as stupendous, as the source of it was pure*—Christ "gave himself for us;" put himself in our place. This

was the meritorious cause of redemption. But what an expression is this, "gave himself!" He who was "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person" gave himself, "for us" rebels and transgressors, who were nothing compared with him, as his creatures, and were less than nothing as fallen sinners.

And to what did he resign and give himself? To the womb of the Virgin, to the manger of Bethlehem, to the reproaches and privations and sufferings of the most benevolent of all lives, and to the ignominy and agony of the most dreadful of all deaths. Ask you to what the Son of God resigned himself? Let Gethsemane and Calvary say; let the anguish and the horror of that fearful night; let the thorns and spear and nails of that mournful crucifixion tell. Who can speak aright of this gift, "this unspeakable gift?" The eternal God become an infant of days; the glories of heaven shrouded and obscured; the blessings and songs of angels exchanged for imprecations and scorn; infinite happiness lost for a time in unutterable woe!

Well may St. Paul say that Christ "gave himself for us." Yes; he did not merely suffer and atone, but he suffered such agonies for us, and made an atonement by such a death, that he gave up, as it were, himself, resigned all he was and had, for us.

If he had given heaven and earth for us, it would, comparatively speaking, have been nothing; if he had given angels and archangels for us, it would have been nothing; but to give himself for us, surpasses all the thoughts of man.

4. But to proceed with our apostle's statement in the text, *the vicarious nature of these sufferings* is

next set forth, "An offering and a sacrifice unto God." The passion of Christ was not merely designed to be an example to us of humility and patience under suffering—though this important end was embraced. It was not simply designed to confirm his doctrine—though this was also included; but it was offered as an atoning sacrifice unto God, in the stead and place of sinners. It was a substitution. "He suffered the just for the unjust." This is the proper definition of atonement—the reconciling of parties offended, by the interposition of a meritorious compensation. "Christ was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." "He gave his life a ransom for many." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness; that God might be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Such is the strong and emphatic language of every part of Scripture. And when this language is compared with that of the legal institutions, the atonement ascribed to the daily lamb, the sprinkling of the blood at the Passover, the transfer of guilt from the offerer to the victim on the great day of atonement, and the whole typical and ceremonial economy of Moses, no doubt can for a moment remain as to the proper satisfaction, propitiation, substitution and vicarious offering of the Death of Christ.

Yes, my brethren, we know, upon apostolical authority, that "it was not possible for the blood of bulls

or of goats to take away sin." We know that these sacrifices were only " shadows for the time then present." We know that " Christ is the true High Priest;" that heaven is the real sanctuary; and that " neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." And we know further, " that if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; much more doth the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purge our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."

The apostle, moreover, in our text uses two words, *προσφορά* and *θυσία*, the first a general term for all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the second a special word for a sacrifice with shedding of blood, that is, for the oblation of an animal victim. He therefore intended to declare that in Christ, the real victim, all those typical offerings which before represented him were united.

Further, St. Paul does not say, Christ gave himself for us like to an offering and a sacrifice; but, " Christ gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice"—words on which no other meaning can be put than that our Lord made an actual, real, and full satisfaction for sin.

And when we add to all this that, on the one hand, the whole heathen world has retained some vestiges of the doctrine and usage of the primitive institution of sacrifices, as we see around us every day in India—whilst, on the other, the universal Church of Christ, without a single exception, in all its branches, in every

part of the world, has ever considered the atonement of Christ as one of the cardinal doctrines of the gospel : to which our Lord indeed has attached an especial sacrament to represent and seal its benefits,—when all this is considered, we conclude with triumphant certainty that the great doctrine of our Lord's atonement stands at the front of the gospel ; is its glory and its consummation.

5. But, as if the apostle would have nothing unsaid on such a topic, he proceeds to assert *the efficacy and acceptance before Almighty God of this sacrifice of Christ*, by declaring it to be “for a sweet-smelling savour.” This refers to the fragrant incense burnt upon the golden altar under the Law ; and points out the acceptance of Christ's propitiation. It concludes the argument. In this sacrifice of his only-begotten Son, wherein he “made his soul an offering for sin,” God is “well pleased.” He beholds it with complacency. He views his injured law satisfied. He accounts his violated moral government repaired and honoured. He sees the interests of holiness secured. He reposes in the accomplished offering. “He smells,” as it is said in the book of Genesis, “a savour of rest”—a fragrant odour far more delightful than any of the victims or any of the perfumes which had been presented of old, whether on the brazen or the golden altar. And as the incense under the Law filled the Holy of Holies, and the prayers of the congregation were offered without, during the time of incense ; so the prayers and services of the sincere penitent are now accepted through “the much incense” of the sacrifice of our Lord.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Gen. viii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Luke i. 10. Rev. viii. 3.

Thus “mercy and truth have met together;” thus “righteousness and peace have kissed each other;” thus doth “mercy rejoice against judgment;” and “God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”

What a beneficent religion is that which builds on such a foundation; that accounts it the grand peculiarity of its revelation to present to miserable, guilty, condemned man the very blessing he first needs, a way of return, a ground of pardon, a method of justification. Truly may it be said, “God is love; in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only-begotten Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins.”

II. But let us proceed to show *the connection of holy love to our fellow creatures with this great doctrine of atonement*. For the whole statement we have been reviewing is introduced by the apostle for no other purpose than to enforce love to the brethren. “Be ye followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us,” &c. The first law, the sovereign rule, and the perfect model, that we have to follow, is God; the second law, the second reason, the second model of Christians, is Jesus Christ. This repairs the ruins of the first, and restores man both to the love of God and the love of his neighbour, from the motive of the overwhelming love of Christ in his sacrifice of himself for us.

Let us consider then both the duty, and its connection with the doctrine.

1. “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” To “walk



in love" is, therefore, to fulfil this law habitually, cheerfully, and from the bottom of the heart. It is to perform all the obligations and cherish all the benevolent affections, which we owe to our fellow creatures, and more especially to our fellow Christians.

The idea of walking, when transferred to this duty, implies the habitual tenor, the constant, daily progress of a benevolent life. A step or two taken now and then, is not a walk; an occasional act or two of kindness is not walking in love. We must go on day by day exercising the sympathies, and performing the deeds of Christian good will. We must proceed step by step throughout life, arranging our projects, forming our plans, moulding our temper, so as best to fulfil this "law of Christ." It must be a daily walk.

Under this comprehensive precept the whole body of morals as regards our neighbour is included. All the subordinate instances and duties of sincere good will and of desire for his welfare; of delight and complacency in his prosperity; of sympathy in his sorrows; of zeal and activity in rendering him service.

Love will fulfil all the relative duties we owe him with cheerfulness and singleness of heart, as unto the Lord, and not unto men—the appropriate obligations of our age, sex, calling, circumstances, engagements.

It will lead us to desire a reciprocal affection from our neighbour in return.

Where a Christian brother is concerned, it will flow out into a warmer affection, and show itself by all the appropriate duties of the communion of saints.

Love will teach us, also, to shun all the passions and acts which are contrary to its exercise—injustice, fraud, deceit, treachery, violence, untruth ; uncleanness, fornication, adultery ; envy, slander, hatred, malice—in short, every thing that can injure our neighbour's property, reputation, chastity, interests, and even prejudices.

In cases of differences of opinion, of the exercise of authority and government ; of contentions and alleged injuries, love will induce us to heal, and not to irritate the feelings of others, to remit from our strict right, to forbear and pardon, to return good for evil, to put the best construction on doubtful actions, to guard against all irritating and contemptuous language, and to do all in our power to convince and gain an opponent, even where serious differences of judgment exist, and such as a good conscience will not allow us to conceal—for the foundations of justice and sincerity must never be disturbed, or love will become cowardice, indifference, latitudinarianism.

In a word, we are to endeavour to follow the directions of St. Paul in his beautiful delineation of this grace—"Charity suffereth long and is kind : charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself ; is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly ; seeketh not her own ; is not easily provoked ; thinketh no evil. Rejoiceth not in iniquity ; but rejoiceth in the truth. Beareth all things ; believeth all things ; hopeth all things ; endureth all things."

What would be the beneficial effects, let me here ask, of this one principle of Christian morals being fully acted on ! How great would be the change in the

aspect of the world ! How would our families and neighbourhoods be blessed ! How ornamental and honourable would our common Christianity appear in the eyes of Heathens and Mohammedans.

And it is to produce more and more of this holy love to our fellow creatures that the whole mystery of redemption—next to the pardon of sin and immediate glory of God thereby—is revealed.

2. Let us proceed then to point out *the force of the connection here intimated by the word, “as;”* “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us.”

This connection, we first observe, is not one of merit. Our good works are not to overturn the doctrine of our pardon and justification by the death of Christ, but to follow from it. The exhortation of the text is addressed to the Ephesians, already quickened from the death of sin, already illuminated by God’s Holy Spirit, already renewed and created again after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, already pardoned in the blood of Christ. If we attempt to lay the foundation of good works in pride, ingratitude, and self-dependence, we shall utterly fail. Our love to our brethren is the fruit of God’s grace to us ; is a consequence flowing from Christ’s love in his atonement ; is, after all, so full of imperfections that it never can stand the severity of God’s justice ; and is required of us in its utmost exercise by the holy law of God every moment we breathe, and can therefore never expiate by its feeble and mixed efforts our unnumbered offences—nay, in itself must augment their amount.

The connection is, therefore, not one of merit—our justification is by faith only through the redemption and atonement of our Lord; but it is a connection which, in the circumstances of fallen man, is infinitely stronger—of indispensable gratitude; of example and exhortation; of measure and permanence.

It is a connection of *indispensable gratitude*. It is the becoming return; it is the obligation arising from infinite mercy. “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” It is surely fit that being so loved, we should love in return. If the highest benefits can touch our hearts, if the most undeserved love, the most expansive and costly benevolence, then indeed will the love of Christ excite us to love our brother. The obligation we are under as creatures, are strengthened in a tenfold measure by the blessings of Christianity. Faith also in those blessings can only be known to be a living and salutary one by the fruits of love to our fellow men; if it be without them, it is a dead, historical, worthless principle, which neither unites to Christ nor conveys to the soul the benefits of his atonement.

So fixed is this connection, that we are taught by our Lord to pray for the Divine forgiveness, only as we forgive others. And the very badge and mark of his disciples is this, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another:” whilst at the last solemn judgment, the fruits of love, and of no other grace, are exhibited in our Saviour’s description of that day as the proofs of faith and the evidences of our adoption as the children of God. Love is indeed the end of the commandment, the general

root and principle of all morals, the sum and abridgment of the law, the chief of the theological virtues, the prime fruit of the divine Spirit, the bond of perfection and consummation of grace, and the royal and sovereign command of Christ's spiritual kingdom.

But the connection is also one of *example and exhortation*. For where was there ever such a pattern of love as that displayed by our Lord, both in his sufferings for us, and in the whole tenor of his benevolent life? Example moves man more than mere precept. Was there ever such an example? Was there ever such a ground laid for exhortation? Was not our Saviour's whole heart full of love in his incarnation, sufferings, agony, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, glory, kingdom, gift of the Holy Ghost, erection of the Church, appointment of divers orders of ministers therein?

And then in the tenor of his life—what tenderness, what compassion to the sorrowful, what humility, what forbearance, what consideration for his adversaries, what meekness under reproach, what condescension to the dulness of his disciples, what care for their support when about to leave them! Here our exhortations are bottomed. “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us; for even hereunto are ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously.”

But what shall I say of the *measure and degree of this obligation* to holy love to our fellow-creatures, to which Christ thus calls us by the motive of indispensable gratitude and of attractive example? “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us”—in something of the same measure; with a like intense-ness; and under similar circumstances of sorrow and self-denial. We are often contented with easy and perfunctory acts of charity. But we should aim at something resembling that fervent, costly, never-failing charity which appeared in our divine Lord. We cannot indeed rise to the same elevation—the cases are in many important respects incapable of being compared. But we ought to labour after a less faint and less distant imitation of it. We may, and ought to approach vastly nearer than we have ever yet done. Our conduct and spirit may not be dishonourable to our profession; but it is not so honourable as it might be. We should study our Lord's character, as a painter studies an exquisite portrait, endeavouring to lessen the differences and improve the likeness stroke by stroke. We should be particularly careful to let the degree of Christ's love to us outweigh the objections and difficulties which arise as impediments to the duty. When we are in danger of dwelling too much in our own minds on the injuries done us by others; on the unworthiness of the objects of our bounty; on the number of applications which have been made to us; on the differences of taste and sentiment between us and others; on the trouble and cost imposed on us; on the loss occasioned to ourselves; on the reproaches we may incur, and similar topics, let us ask ourselves if any injuries we have received can be com-

pared with our own offences against God ; if any want of desert in our neighbour can equal our guilt and demerit before Almighty God ; whether any pains or difficulties or losses or reproaches to which we can be called can be named with the sufferings of his life and the anguish of his death.

What, then, is *the tendency on the whole of the Christian doctrine we have been considering* ? It is mysterious, indeed, and incomprehensible in many respects—which is only to say we are ignorant, finite creatures. But, allowing that we cannot fathom the mysteries of the Divine nature, of the incarnation and death of our Lord, of the permission of evil, and of the times and seasons for revealing gradually during nearly six thousand years the healing truth ; still can any one doubt that in all practical respects—that is, in all the respects with which we are concerned—it is replete with benevolence to man ; or can any one for a moment question whether the command of loving our neighbour as ourselves, is not infinitely strengthened by the obligations of gratitude to our divine Lord by this particular method of redemption ? Is it not deserving of all admiration that the greatest mystery of Christianity should be inseparably connected with the greatest duty ; and that what is at once the most difficult to fallen man, and most obviously conducive to his peace and tranquillity, should be joined on to the most inconceivable instance of our Saviour's love in dying as a sacrifice for sins ? Does it not mark a Divine religion that the very act of faith which sues for pardon of sin and acceptance with God,

and thus touches on the deepest mysteries of Christianity, should require at the same moment, for the proof of its sincerity, the forgiveness of injuries, and the love of our neighbour ?

It deserves notice, that these two points of Christianity, the atonement of Christ's love, and our charity to others as its fruit, as connected in the manner we have been describing, are also visibly represented in this very connection in the holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ.

Few are the external symbols of the universal religion. This you would expect. The holy Scriptures, the holy sabbath, the holy worship of almighty God, the holy sacraments, the holy ministry of the word, include nearly all: and these are equally practicable in all ages, in all countries, by all classes of men.

And amongst these, assuredly the most awful is the mystery of the Eucharist, wherein the body and blood of our Lord are verily and indeed taken and received by the faith of the humble communicant.

And what does this celebration exhibit before the eyes of men and angels ? The atonement made from infinite love by our Saviour Christ ; and the consequent love to each other which binds those who partake of it. Wherever Christianity goes, she establishes this memorial of the vicarious death of her Lord, and of the motive it affords for the love of each other. The doctrine of his deity and atoning sacrifice will never be lost from the Church whilst the sacrament of these mysteries remains ; nor will the charity of Christians ever be extinguished, whilst it continues to be reani-



mated by every succeeding celebration of these mysteries. That religion must surely be from God which carries such a banner before it.

But, lastly, these two points, thus prominently set forth, constitute, in fact, the true happiness of man. Without pardon he can have no stable peace. The conscience is unpacified, the heart is at enmity with the ever-blessed God, the wrath of the Almighty rests upon him, the terrors of death and judgment impend, the immortal soul pines and sorrows in widowhood from the fountain of felicity.

In like manner, without the restoration of love to his fellow creatures he can never be at rest. Envy, variance, contentions, selfish passions, pride, hatred, malice, are a plague to the man in whose breast they reign, as well as to those who are the objects of them. His social nature is in desolation till holy love to his fellow creatures unites him again to his race.

The gospel, as we have seen, opens both these sources of happiness. It reconciles man to God in the atonement of Christ ; it reconciles man to his fellow man by the love which that immense act of Christ's love to him excites.

Thus in the very centre point of Christianity, where all its doctrines and all its duties unite, man's happiness is as much consulted, as the glory of all the Divine perfections. And we have only to let love be more and more the sum of our religion—the love of God, the love of man—to be more truly and manifestly preparing for the world and region of love in heaven.

## S E R M O N    I V .

A C T S   x v i i .   30, 31.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent. Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

WE have already considered the most obvious and general character of Revelation as impressed on our Lord's sermon at Nazareth.<sup>1</sup> We have endeavoured to illustrate the excellency of the gospel from its mystery being the object of heavenly contemplation.<sup>2</sup> And we have pointed out the connection of holy love to our fellow creatures with the great doctrine of atonement.<sup>3</sup>

In these inquiries the first broad outlines of Christianity have been evidently seen to be full of benevolent design towards mankind.

The next question naturally is,—Under what obligation are men placed to receive this scheme of mercy? By what authority are they bound to obey the gospel?

This leads us to consider, on the present occasion,

<sup>1</sup> Sermon I.<sup>2</sup> Sermon II.<sup>3</sup> Sermon III.

the universal call to repentance given by Almighty God to man.

In discussing which, three points may be considered ; The times which are described as now passed ; God's present call to man ; The reason. Or, in the words of the text, *The times of ignorance—Men now commanded every where to repent—Because God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.*

Nor will the benevolence of the gospel fail to appear in this topic also, as well as in the preceding. To give affectionate warning to man of his danger ; to call him off intelligibly and authoritatively from his sins, the cause of all misery ; and to “ bless him by turning him away from his iniquities,” is in the highest degree kind and beneficent. A false pretence to benevolence may, indeed, be set up by concealing from men the truth of their case ; but real compassion opens it first, and then provides a remedy.

I. What, then, is passed, now that an universal call to repentance is issued ? The text replies, *The times of ignorance* ; that long period of blindness as to the true God and his acceptable worship, in which the Athenians, in common with all the nations of the earth, had fallen. For it was at Athens, the seat of learning and the arts, that St. Paul thus designated the times which preceded the gospel.

In what particulars this ignorance consisted, the apostle's discourse shows. It appeared in men's “ worshipping an unknown God ;” in their not knowing that God “ created the heavens and the earth ;” and that he “ dwelt not in temples made with hands,” nor had

“ need of any thing ;” in not knowing his over-ruling providence, nor the design of his appointment, that “ men should feel after him and find him” in the works of creation, which testified of “ his eternal power and Godhead ;” in not knowing that in him “ men live and move and have their being ;” and in consequently supposing that “ the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stones, graven by art and man’s device.”

These things constituted, before the gospel, as they do now, times of ignorance. Wherever God in his glorious being and attributes is not known, there are times of ignorance. Wherever his creation of the world, his providence, his constant support of man, his government, his will, his redemption in Christ Jesus, and the final judgment which he has appointed, are unknown, there are times of ignorance.

Tell me not of the glory of Athens. Tell me not of her learning, her science, her philosophers, her schools, her boasted civilization. Tell me not of her successes in the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture. Tell me not of Demosthenes, or Pericles, or Thucydides. Tell me not of her historical annals, her political institutions, her national glory, her court of Areopagus, her legislative assemblies, her superiority over the barbarous nations.

On these topics the apostle utters not a word. The times of Athens are times of ignorance, so long as the most momentous interests of man are unknown—his creation, his fall, his guilt, his responsibility, the way of his obtaining pardon, holiness, and eternal life.

And it is thus we are to judge of the nations around us now.

These times then, which preceded the gospel, God is said in the text “to have winked at;” to have turned his face from; to have acted as if he overlooked their state. As “the eyes of the Lord” are said to be “over the righteous;” and to be “on the land” of his people “from the beginning of the year to the end of it;” so the Almighty is described, after the manner of men, as having winked at the idolatrous nations, previously to his sending to them the immediate messengers of truth and grace. He “suffered them to walk in their own ways.” Though even then he failed not to mark their impiety and idolatry; even then he “left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons;” even then they were “without excuse,” because “when they knew”—or might have known—“God,” they “glorified him not as God; not liking to retain him in their knowledge.” But during these “times of ignorance,” He was pleased to bear with much long-suffering their apostacy, idolatry, and various abominations; and not to punish them with the severity which his own people brought on themselves by similar provocations.

But these times were passed; and other times commenced at the promulgation of the gospel. Then “the kingdom of heaven” began; then the general expectation prevailing throughout the East, that some great deliverer should come, was fulfilled; then, as the apostles proceeded from kingdom to kingdom, from city to city, they proclaimed the times of grace and truth, in the birth, miracles, doctrine, death and resurrection of Messiah. Then as the feet of St. Paul entered Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, Athens, Rome, the times were

changed—those of ignorance were closed, and those of light and truth broke out.

In this way, all the gentiles throughout the Roman empire heard of the chief facts and doctrines of the gospel ; and continued no longer in a state of insuperable blindness. And if any nations at the present day remain in spiritual darkness, the fault is not in the purpose of the gospel, but in the disobedience and tardiness of the church. It is in opposition to the Divine and ample commission, “ Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ;” “ Go and teach all nations.” And it constitutes a stronger motive to us to redeem lost opportunities, and carry the light of the gospel into all the dark places of the earth ; especially those entrusted to our government by Divine Providence.

II. But this leads us to reply to the second inquiry raised from the text,—What are men now commanded to do ; by saying, *God commandeth all men every where to repent.*

1. Repentance is after-thought, after-care—it is that change of heart, producing a gradual change of conduct, which the transgressor is led by serious after-thought to enter on. He “ considereth,” and then “ turneth from all his transgressions.” He “ cometh”—after his sins and follies—“ to himself ;” and then “ ariseth and returneth to his father” with confession and supplication. “ Sin,” says an old writer, “ is an aversion from God ; repentance a conversion to God.”

It begins in a due knowledge and conviction of sin as committed against the one living and true God ; with

heart-felt sorrow for having offended so great and good a Being. This prepares for repentance, properly so called. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of." For, "the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness," the awakened penitent acknowledges the justice of the sentence, is convinced of his transgressions against God's holy will, and trembles at the fearful consequences which impend.

He begins to examine his heart, tempers, spirit, conduct, and pursuits, by the standard of God's commandments; and as he examines, his knowledge and conviction of sin is augmented. And when he contemplates the holiness and goodness of Almighty God, and his just claims upon his creatures' love, he is touched with sorrow. He "smites upon his breast," with the publican, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." He is "pricked to the heart" with grief, consternation, regret; and cries out, "What shall I do to be saved?"

This godly sorrow is not like the mere remorse of Saul or Ahithophel; it is not the rage and despair of Cain; it is not the disappointment at being detected of Achan or Judas, nor the dread of punishment apparent in king Ahab. These are specimens of "the sorrow of the world which worketh death." But it is a heart-felt grief for having sinned against God, arising from a knowledge of his glorious excellencies and his benignity and long-suffering towards us. It leads a man, like Job, to "abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes;" to "bemoan himself," after the example of Ephraim; to say with the prodigal, "I have sinned

against heaven and before thee ;” and with the Psalmist, “ Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.”

The rapidity or otherwise of the conviction, and the measure of alarm and terror attending it, are of subordinate moment. Sometimes the process is slow and gentle ; at others intense and sudden. In all cases, however, the work must be interior and permanent to be salutary. There must be a steady, solid, deeply-seated perception of guilt before the supreme and only Potentate, and sorrow on the account of it.

The resolute turning away from all sin to God, is that in which repentance properly consists ; and which proves the sincerity of the preceding conviction and sorrow. “ Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” So long as any one sin is willingly adhered to, there can be no repentance. Renunciation of every iniquity, secret and open, is indispensable. Knowledge, conviction, sorrow are therefore required, because without them there can be no practical change wrought in the heart and life. But if men rest in these emotions and carry them not out into their appropriate effects, they evaporate, like all passions when stopping short of their objects, into mere sentiment, and rather harden than improve the heart. It was when the prodigal actually arose and came to his father, that the sincerity of his previous convictions appeared. It is when the sheep returns from its ways to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, that repentance for its sinful wanderings is manifested.

Outward courses of vice, if such have prevailed, must be at once and decidedly abandoned ; drunken-



ness, profaneness, sabbath-breaking, impurity, oppression, deceit, unrighteousness.

Or, if sin has chiefly taken the garb of worldliness, love of pleasure, vanity, display, carelessness, delight in ungodly companions, indifference to religion ; these must in like manner cease.

The sins of the heart must equally be renounced ; pride, self-righteousness, envy, hatred, variance, emulations, covetousness, an evil eye, foolishness.

From all these secret and more open ways of sin, the penitent turns to God, to holiness, to purity, to meekness, to the observation of the sabbath ; to reverence for the name of God ; to all relative duties and the correspondent tempers of mind which they require.

“ Works meet for repentance ” follow ; every thing which can demonstrate that the convictions and sorrow we have described, have led to a real turning from all sin to God. Such are prayer for pardon in the name of Christ, watchfulness against easily besetting iniquities, the shunning of places and occasions where temptation springs, the choice of pious acquaintance, the profitable disposal of time, influence, money ; restitution to those whom we had injured, whether in character, person, or estate ; abstinence from every appearance of evil, seeking advice and counsel in difficulties, diligence in all the means of grace, confession of sin before God and man, humble dependence on the grace of the Holy Spirit to fulfil our good resolutions ; fear of declining from God ; anxious desire to embrace and hold fast the blessed hope proposed in the gospel.

Such is the general nature of that “ repentance unto

salvation which needeth not to be repented of," springing from "godly sorrow" as its immediate source, and flowing out into all the natural and suitable fruits of a penitent and holy life.

I have described it rapidly and by a few main characteristics—as when we are asked the nature of gold, we define it by its properties, malleability, colour, specific gravity, &c. But in practice it is of slow growth, often long in maturing, subject to many interruptions, and not soon brought up to an advanced and fixed character.

It must be ever remembered, that the grace of God's Holy Spirit is indispensable to us, as fallen creatures, in the discharge of this, as well as of every other Christian duty. We can do nothing spiritually good of ourselves. But we are directed to use the means of grace, as reasonable and accountable beings, relying on God "to work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." Our Saviour is "exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins." "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh"—is the promise of the Lord by the prophet. To which the language of the apostle corresponds, "Then hath God unto the gentiles also granted repentance unto life."

2. The repentance, then, which constitutes the first duty of men when the times of ignorance have passed, being what I have stated, the variety of persons and classes to whom the call is addressed, must now be noticed. The language of the text is universal; God hath commanded "all men, every where, to repent."

The apostle had especially in view the heathen audience whom he addressed, the Epicurean with his love of pleasure, the Stoic with his pride, the learned student with his refinements, the curious idler with his novelties; all, in short, of every class who had been living in the spiritual ignorance as to God, the soul, eternity, sin, and the way of pardon and peace, to which he had adverted—all, in short, to whom the call should be addressed, either by himself or by his fellow apostles, or by other ministers in the same, or any subsequent age.

To the heathen, therefore, now, as well as eighteen centuries since, the invitation is to be given. They have been sinning against the law of their own conscience. They have not kept the rule of duty, defective as it may have been, which the traditions of the primitive revelations to Adam or the patriarchs or Moses, had prescribed. They have not “sought after God and felt for him, if haply they might find him.” The works of creation have preached in vain to them their one glorious, self-existing and wise Author. They have been guilty of “worshipping and serving the creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed for evermore.” Idolatry is at once the stigma of the human understanding, and the highest provocation against the eternal, invisible, infinitely perfect Jehovah—even as infidelity in a spouse is the highest crime against a benignant and faithful husband. It is an affront put upon the glorious Lord of all beings in the nearest and most intimate of relations.

Repentance, then, is the duty of all in heathen lands, and especially, when the times of ignorance are passed,

and the true light begins to shine. Grief for having dishonoured God ; shame for having “ said to the wood and to the stone, Arise and save us ;” fear lest a jealous God should resign them to their just punishment, these are the feelings of the penitent heathen. Then he turns resolutely from sin, and “ brings forth fruits meet for repentance,” by forsaking all those “ abominable idolatries,” and all “ that excess of riot,” as the apostle speaks, which accompany idolatry and superstition.

But the nominal Christian is, also, called on, every where, and under all variety of circumstances, to repent. All men, in Christian lands, as well as others, need repentance ; and if they have not repented must begin the duty ; and if they have, must daily persevere in it, in order to salvation. All have sinned against God, against natural conscience, against the revealed will of the Supreme Being, against the Ten Commandments, against the blessed Gospel. No man has ever “ loved the Lord his God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, and his neighbour as himself ;” and therefore, “ except we repent, we must all,” as our Saviour declares, “ perish.”

There are unnumbered differences in the aggravations of men’s sins ; but in respect of their being universally guilty and in need of repentance, there is “ no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Nor can there be any faith in the atonement of a Saviour, if there be none of that repentance which prepares for it. The most amiable and innocent in the careless estimate of the world ; the most learned, the most acute, the most kind-hearted—

all need repentance, not indeed for such sins as they have happily not committed, but for such as they have—forgetfulness of God, idolatrous love of the creature, hardness of heart, encouragement given to others in their sins, cowardice as to God and duty; vanity, conceit, selfishness, pride, ingratitude, envy, uncharitableness, coldness of affection to God and man.

3. It is important, however, in the next place, that the authoritative command with which this universal call is sanctioned, should be borne in mind. The apostle in the text says, “But now”—in opposition to the times of ignorance at which God had winked—“commandeth all men to repent.” It is not a matter left to our mere option; it is not a matter of small concern which may be perfunctorily discharged or wholly omitted without serious evil. It is an imperative, primary duty. It rests upon the “command” of that God who hath made us rational and accountable beings; and who has the supreme right to enjoin on us such precepts as he sees good.

The Heathen and Mohammedan is not only called to worship the one true God, through the only Redeemer and Mediator, Jesus Christ, if he happens to like to do so; but is “commanded” by the Almighty himself to repent of his past idolatry, false worship, faith in an impostor, conformity to the licentious and abominable practices connected with a neglect of seeking after the true God. “The times of ignorance” lessen, indeed, the guilt, but do not excuse it. Sorrow for culpable idolatry, superstition and vice, is obligatory; men are solemnly commanded, not by man, but God, to comply

with that call to "repentance unto life" which is here enjoined.

This authoritative force of truth, so far as the conscience is concerned, is ever to be considered. The commission to the apostles to "go out into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," answers to this command of God "to all men every where to repent."

All this is totally opposed to the temporizing spirit of heathen philosophers of old, as well as in the present day; who, though convinced of the folly of idolatry, yet conform to it, and advise others to do the same—thus perpetuating to succeeding ages all the ignorance which prevails in their own; and holding all forms of religion to be the same. It opposes the notions too prevalent still, that Hindooism is as good for Hindoos, and Islamism for Mohammedans, as Christianity for Christians. It opposes also the semi-infidel spirit which esteems the faith of the Hindoos, and the faith of the Mohammedans, as of the same kind with the faith of Christians, though less pure. The positive command of the text opposes, further, the false and maukish cant of benevolence which would bid us to leave the religions of other nations unregarded, and be content with following our own. Would you have a Rajah, say such persons, disgrace his family by changing his religion? Would you have a Rajpoot, or a Mohammedan of the highest birth, desert the faith of his fathers? Thus the innocency of idolatry and imposture is taken for granted; the subordinate and trifling nature of fixing aright the object and manner of religious worship is supposed; man is, in fact, not considered as accountable for his

belief; truth and error are represented as equally, or nearly equally good; and the most discreet attempts to invite men to the consideration of Christianity are discouraged.

From this proceeded the ready condemnation of Christian missions which used many years since to be so prevalent—the charges of excessive zeal and fanaticism then so commonly advanced; and the excuses which were framed for leaving the world to perish in idolatry, imposture, sensuality and misery, under the thin pretence of our not being authorized to interfere, by argument and meek grounds of reason, with their forms of faith. But not so thought our divine Lord who delivered this command to his apostles—not so the apostle of the gentiles who acted upon it—not so the Christian missionaries who converted our Druid ancestors in England—and not so Christians now, if they believe the declaration of the text. If it be enthusiasm to use mild and gentle means to dissipate the ignorance of the world, and to let them know that “God commandeth all men, every where, to repent,” we glory in the charge—we bind it to our bosom, as the symbol of our fidelity to that Saviour, who scrupled not to come from heaven to die for us men and our salvation.

III. But all these arguments receive an inconceivable additional force from the judgment of the last day, which the apostle assigns as the reason of the divine command to universal repentance; *Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;*

*whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

1. Repentance is therefore the indispensable duty of every sinner, whether Idolater, Mohammedan, or professed Christian, because a future judgment will take place, from which none can escape, unless a reconciliation has been effected by a timely penitence and return to the one living and true God. If there be any accountable being on the face of the earth, who is exempt from the necessity of death and judgment, he is exempt, and he only, from the obligation to repentance. But there is no such individual. "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment." The day is fixed. As the time of solemn assize in human affairs is ordinarily named beforehand; so of this last judgment the day and hour are appointed; known only indeed, to him with whom are "the times and seasons;" but unalterably determined. To each of us, the hour of our death is in truth, that of judgment; for as the tree falls so will it lie; and as death leaves us, so will eternity find us. And of the time of our death this only notice doth our Saviour give, that it will be in "such an hour as we think not."

2. The rule of judgment is proclaimed; "He will judge the world in righteousness." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" No error will then be committed; no secret then lie hidden; no forgetfulness will then creep over us; no contradictory testimony then arise; no motive then be unknown; no circumstances of alleviation or aggravation then be concealed; no acceptance of persons then intervene. They that have "sinned without" the revealed "law" of God, will



be “judged without law;” whilst those who “have sinned in the law, will be judged by it.” “The books will be opened”—the book of God’s remembrance, the book of man’s conscience, the books of the holy law and glorious gospel: to which “another book” will, thank God, be added—in which may each of our names appear!—“the book of life.”

And God hath “commanded all men to repent,” because none can stand before this righteous tribunal in themselves. None have acted up to the light of nature and conscience and general tradition, in Heathen and Mohammedan lands: none up to the written law of God in Christian. It is remarkable, indeed, that some faint vestiges of the will of God impressed on the heart of man at his first creation, aided by the floating notices of tradition, exist in every heathen nation in the present day. There is every where some notion of a Supreme Being, some idea of a Providence, some sense of a difference between moral good and evil, some general impression of the duty of repentance for sin, and some anticipations of a future judgment. Obscure, feeble, inefficient as they are, they yet prove the duty of men to repent of their sins, as well as the obligation of their seeking brighter light; and leave them “without excuse,” if they fail to do so.

3. The Judge himself is, further, named, as is the case, for greater solemnity, in human judicatures. “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” It is the “Son of man,” who will then “come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, and who will then sit on the throne of his glory;” whilst “before him will be gathered all nations”—that

Son of man, who, being one in our nature in all things, sin only excepted, will know the whole frame of man ; and who, being also the Saviour, will distinguish with infinite ease, those who have known his gospel and brought forth the suitable fruits, from those who have not.

4. Lastly, the confirmation and “ assurance” of this appointed judgment has been given to all men by the Almighty, “ in that he hath raised Jesus from the dead.” To this ultimate fact, all the evidences of Christianity come. To this we appeal, after we have explained to the heathen inquirer the times of ignorance which have passed ; the times of light brought in by the gospel ; the repentance to which God calls men, and the judgment day which is hastening on.

So long as man remains man, and acts in his most important concerns on moral evidence, the fact of our Lord’s resurrection will be acknowledged by every competent inquirer. Men may want habits of investigation, historical knowledge, power of applying their reasoning faculties, candour, honesty of purpose, interest in the question, diligence, perseverance—and where these exist not in some degree, nothing can be done in the way of historical testimony—other methods must then be taken ; chiefly appeals to the goodness of God in creation, addresses to the conscience, references to the innocent and lovely character of our Lord ; arguments founded on the obvious adaptation of his religion to the miseries of man, and solemn warnings of future judgment. But where there is the least furniture of preparatory knowledge, and any measure of sincerity and candour, the miracle of our Saviour’s resurrection is capable of the strongest moral demonstration.

Twelve men of simple, unpretending character, but of good understanding, and upright, benevolent lives, affirm, in the place and at the time where it occurred, the fact of the resurrection of their Master, in the face of those who had crucified him, and whom they charged with his unrighteous death. They assert that during forty days he eat and drank with them, and that he afterwards was taken up into heaven in their actual presence.

On the footing of this fact they enter on a new kind of life, full of difficulties, privations, dangers, sufferings; without any one assignable motive but the truth of the miracle.

They continue till death in the practice of every imaginable virtue, especially benevolence and self-denial: and not one wavers in his testimony; till they at length seal, all of them, the truth of it with their blood. The religion they thus promulgate, is attended with an incredible variety of miraculous works; and by the force of this divine testimony, aided by divine grace, is received all over the civilized world; and changes, in three centuries, the religion of mankind, in spite of the combined opposition of the rank, learning, power, intellectual associations, social usages of the mightiest universal empire which had ever then been known—and all this, the religion itself being unaided by the civil power.

To crown the whole, no other account of the phenomena has ever yet been framed in the least degree plausible; whilst the hypothesis of the truth of the resurrection just accounts for them and no more.

This triumphant miracle is moreover connected

with every other mark of a divine religion ; prophecies which went before ; the personal benevolence and innocence of our Lord's character, the miracles of his life, the holiness of his doctrine, the wonderful descent of the Holy Ghost, the divine promulgation of the gospel, its supernatural effects ; and its preservation and continuance to the present day. Every thing concurs to prove the Christian religion, and to show that the resurrection of Christ was an event amidst such preceding and subsequent miracles, natural ; in its place ; the adequate and appropriate evidence for an immensely important purpose, the setting up a divine religion.

Let then, for I pass to the application of the discourse, *the humble minister and teacher go forth on the footing of his Saviour's resurrection, and he cannot fail of success.* Let him prove from this fact the certainty of that future judgment of which some traces are found in every human mind. Let him describe the righteous rule of that tribunal, and the impossibility of men, as sinners, standing before it with acceptance. Let him next describe, with the apostles, the chief features of the times of ignorance ; the unknown God, the idolatry, the vices of fallen man. Let him then say to the Heathen and Mohammedan, " Whom you ignorantly worship, him declare we unto you."

Thus let him proceed to the universal call to repentance ; and point out the nature and necessity of prayer for the aid of the Holy Spirit, in order to their repenting unto salvation. Let the blessed doctrines connected with the resurrection be then inculcated.

In all this his spirit must be gentle, his proceedings discreet, his benevolence conspicuous. It is for God to command—man is only to entreat, and reason. He must be extremely cautious therefore not to confound his mild persuasions as a fellow creature, with the authority of the Almighty upon the conscience.

Thus let him believe, that though some, like most of the Athenian auditory, may “mock” at his discourse; and others defer the consideration, saying, “We will hear thee again of this matter:” yet some will also, like “Damaris and Dionysius the Areopagite,” “cleave” unto him, and become the happy crown and joy of his ministry.

Let each individual before me be directed, in the next place, to inquire whether “*the times of ignorance*” have passed away as to his particular case, and the times of light come; whether he has truly repented and believed and obeyed the gospel; and is truly repenting and believing in it, according to the imperative command of Almighty God. For blindness may envelop the individual mind, though the times of the gospel may have come as to our country in general. If we know not “the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent,” we are in ignorance still. If we know not the evil of sin, the fall of our nature, and the wickedness of our hearts, we are in ignorance still. If we know not the character of “godly sorrow as working repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of,” we are in ignorance still.

And how many are, in this sense, in the “times of ignorance!” “Awake,” then, “thou that sleepest,

and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." Remember the day appointed ; the judgment in righteousness ; the resurrection of the Son of God ; the assurance given thereby : all which you acknowledge : and, acknowledging, have no such alleviation of your unbelief to plead, as the uninstructed heathen have. If you repent not therefore, it will be "more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you." "Raised up to heaven," like Capernaum, in privileges, you will be "thrust down" only the more fearfully "to hell." Obey, then, the voice of mercy. Repent ye. Consider. Pray. Receive the atonement by humble, penitent faith. Exhibit in your own persons the benevolent tendencies of the gospel, even in its calls to the severest duty, by renouncing all the sources of your present and future misery, and by securing by means of it peace, pardon, adoption, grace, hope, holiness, heaven.

## S E R M O N   V.

JOHN vi. 37.

Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.

WE considered in our last discourse the universal call to repentance addressed by Almighty God to man, on the footing of the resurrection of Christ, and the times of light brought on thereby.

We need scarcely pause here, to observe how beneficent must that religion be, which, instead of condemning the world as it merited, publishes terms of reconciliation with the offended Majesty of heaven, and commands men every where to repent and receive the blessings of salvation. that they may escape from all those sins and vices which are the sources of misery, and enter upon a new and happy course of meek and consistent piety. Nothing so beneficial to man, both as to his body and his soul, both as to his individual and social happiness, was ever proposed.

This same benevolent tendency will be more immediately apparent, however, in considering our next topic, the invitation proposed to men to accept the benefits of Christ's death. For, after the contemplation of repentance, we naturally ask, What encouragement has the contrite in heart to apply to the Saviour for pardon, grace, and eternal life ?

The words of our Lord in the text furnish the appropriate answer. They are a part of his discourse to the Jews, after he had miraculously fed the five thousand. In allusion to the occasion, he describes himself and the blessings of his gospel, under the familiar image of bodily food ; “ The bread of God is he that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” He proceeds further to explain his meaning by saying, “ I am the bread of life ; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” And then after touching on the secret transactions with the Father, by means of which he would not be without followers, though most of the Jews should reject his mission—“ but I said unto you, that ye also have seen me and believe not. All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me”—our Saviour utters the gracious promise of the text, as if on purpose to check any apprehensions which might in consequence arise in the breast of the humble inquirer ; “ Him that cometh unto me,” i. e. for this bread of life, that he may never hunger more, “ I will in no wise cast out.”

The allusion is to the provisions of a feast, such as our Lord's previous miracle, or the parable of the marriage supper describes ; and to the natural fear of those complying with the invitation, lest, from some cause or other, they should not be admitted with the guests, but be cast into outer darkness of unprotected night, there to spend the time of the banquet in unavailing weeping and regret.

In the assurance of the text, which is opposed to such apprehensions, we have naturally to consider,



The application supposed to be made ; and, The promise of a gracious reception.

1. The application is thus expressed, “ Him that cometh to me.” Faith in Christ, or coming to him, is the humble approach of a penitent sinner to Christ, as he is set forth in the gospel, under an urgent sense of need, that he may receive all the benefits of his death and mediation. It is not an act of the body, but of the mind ; not a motion of the person, but of the affections. Just as the apostles speak of “ him that cometh unto God,” and of men “ drawing nigh unto God ;” where the spiritual approach of the mind is unquestionably meant. Accordingly, the expressions, believing in Christ, and coming to him, are continually interchanged ; as in one of the passages already cited, “ He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

Such a faith is not the slight, national belief which most men suppose to be all that is intended by the term. They take it for little more than what we possess by education and habit, a sort of historical belief that the facts recorded in the Scriptures, and summed up in the Apostles’ Creed, took place ; that Jesus Christ is a Saviour, and that his doctrines are true. If this were faith, men might with great reason treat it as a matter of easy acquisition, and consider our insisting upon it in the manner we do, as tending to put mere notions and profession in the place of obedience to God’s laws.

But faith in Christ is of another nature. It is that kind of coming to him—each one personally and in-

dividually for himself—under a pressing perception of guilt and danger, which resembles the applications of the sick and disconsolate to our Lord when he was upon earth. To approach him from any motive and in any kind of way, is not enough. It never constituted the act to which the text alludes. There was, of course, at that time a bodily movement involved in coming to him; but not that only. How many of his bitterest enemies came to tempt him, to watch his words, to carry information of them to the Pharisees. How many came, as our Lord in the chapter from which the text is taken declares, because they had “eaten of the loaves and were filled.” How many came and shouted hosannas from mere ignorance and temporary emotion, who in a few hours after as eagerly demanded his crucifixion.

No. Coming to Christ was even then the sincere, humble suit of an indigent creature, with faith in his divine mission, for the particular blessings which he needed. The Syrophœnician mother thus came for her dying daughter; the centurion for his servant; the friends of the paralytic for his cure; the woman, twelve years afflicted, for healing; the blind man for the restoration of sight. And in this manner, especially, the hungry, fainting multitudes came waiting to be fed.

In all these and similar cases, there were three things concurring: a sense of need; some knowledge of Christ's power; an humble application to him. Transfer these ideas to the act of the mind, now that Christ is removed from us as to his bodily presence, and you have the faith, the coming to Christ, of which our text treats.

The difficulty of understanding this, arises from our slight sense of our sins, our perfunctory penitence, our transient view of our danger and helplessness. Words can convey no ideas to the mind if the kindred subjects are not in some measure previously known. It is not in the nature of things that they should. Let a man once perceive the maladies of the soul, as the paralytic and others, when they applied to our Lord on earth, did those of the body, and the meaning of coming to Christ will become manifest; the thing will stand out; the act of faith will be projected, as it were, because the preparatory matters will be understood.

We may illustrate this by several well-known appointments under the Law, some of which our Lord has himself explained: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Conceive the case of the bitten Israelite: the poison is diffusing itself through his frame; he is tormented with anguish; he dreads instant death. Here is the first concurring circumstance—a sense of need. But he hears of the divine direction: he is told that a brazen serpent is raised; that God has promised life to all who look to it. He understands not all the grounds of the appointment; but he believes in the command and promise of him who had chosen Moses as his servant. He turns towards the mystic pole, with trembling perhaps; with a feeble, and almost dying gaze. Still he looks; and life and health follow. Here then are the second and third circumstances—some belief in the appointed remedy, and a due application to it.

So Noah, “ moved with fear of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark for the saving of his house.” So also “ the manslayer” under the Law, seeing the “ avenger of blood” behind him, fled to “ the city of his refuge.” The same things concur.

Represent, then, to yourselves the penitent sinner, such as I endeavoured to describe him in the last discourse. He is awakened to his guilt and danger ; he feels something of the terrors of God’s law in his conscience ; he perceives the worldly, proud, careless, ungodly, rebellious life he has been leading, as it regards the God that made him, and the Saviour who redeemed him ; and he dreads the eternity of fearful and interminable punishment which impends. Here is then the sense of need ; here is the hungry, fainting soul.

He has, however, long had some knowledge of Christ generally as a Saviour. He remembers what he learned at his mother’s knees : he remembers some of the many chapters and sermons he has heard or read. He knows that the Son of God became man for our redemption ; he knows that he has invited all to accept his gospel ; he knows that the Holy Spirit is the author and giver of life. All these general notions which lay dormant in his mind, are now quickened into activity. He reads, he hears, he prays, he endeavours to learn yet more fully the doctrine of a crucified Saviour. This constitutes the second requisite.

The third, the actual coming to Christ, follows. He applies in humble and sincere, though feeble, faith and prayer. He “ goes into his closet, and when he has shut the door,” he bows at the footstool of his Saviour ; he opens his Bible—he reads, “ He is able to save

them to the uttermost who come unto God by him ;” he reads, “ Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out ;” he reads, “ Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” He comes, or endeavours to come and believe and trust, accordingly. At first his fears of rejection predominate ; he is unable to repose on the promise ; he cannot commit his soul for pardon to Christ only ; he understands not how God can justify one who in himself is so unworthy. He implores the Holy Spirit, then, to give him faith ; for he now feels that “ no man can come to Christ aright, unless the Father which hath sent him draw him.” By degrees faith is vouchsafed. God “ works in him to will and do.” He is at length enabled, in the sight of the law of God, to acknowledge and forsake all his original and actual sins, and to rely for pardon on the obedience unto death of the Son of God alone. Thus he is “ justified freely by God’s grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

Thus he comes to Christ and receives him as the bread of life that he may never hunger more ; thus he looks to Christ and obtains healing ; thus he commits his soul to Christ for everlasting life ; thus he flees to Christ as to “ the city of refuge ;” thus he builds on Christ as the “ sure foundation ;” thus he lays hold of Christ, as the “ hope set before him in the gospel.”

This is subsequently the daily habit of his life : he comes continually to the Saviour as “ the bread which came down from heaven ;” he “ eats the flesh and drinks the blood, of the Son of man,” that “ the life,” first derived from that source, may be preserved in him. The “ life indeed which he now lives in the flesh,

he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him."

And this is the reason that faith is so very much insisted on in the Holy Scriptures. It is that which unites to Christ. It is that which is "imputed for righteousness." It is that which forms the tie, the fibula, the vinculum, between the blessings of redemption and the soul of man. It is a solemn act ; a spiritual, but real transaction between the penitent sinner and the Saviour. It is the seal to the bond ; it is the subscription to the covenant of grace ; it is, in a word, the receiving and eating, to our spiritual life and nourishment, that bread of God, which before we only knew by education and theory, and general notions.

Now the difficulty of thus coming to Christ, and continuing to come, throughout life, is confessedly great. The submission of the understanding to the teaching of God, of the conscience to his righteousness, and of the heart and will to his method of salvation and to his authority, which are implied in it, render it an arduous task. It involves such a contrariety to the native pride, self-confidence, and enmity against God of fallen man ; it requires such pains in self-examination, humiliation, and abasement of soul ; it demands such knowledge of the person and work of Christ as set forth in Scripture ; it imposes such incessant, fervent prayers for the grace and power of the Holy Ghost ; it proceeds on such a denial of the senses and the impression of external objects, and such a decisive preference of invisible and distant realities ; and these are all of such difficulty, that nothing but the promise of our

text could meet the case, especially in its initiatory stages.

II. This promise, therefore, we proceed to consider — “Him that cometh unto me,” saith our Lord in the text, “I will in no wise cast out.”

This takes for granted that there would be misgivings in the breast of those who should come to Christ. It implies that the humble suppliant, approaching at the call of mercy, and pressed with extreme hunger, confusion, and misery of mind, would tremble lest his suit should be rejected; and his exclusion in darkness be only aggravated by the light and comfort of those admitted to the feast.

The promise, therefore, is expressed in the strongest and most encouraging terms. This will appear if we advert to the way in which the applicant is described; to the strength of the negation of his being refused; to the gracious reception, on the contrary, which is implied in the turn of the sentence; all supported by our Lord's uniform character.

1. For *the description of the applicant* is full of encouragement; “Him that cometh.” It is the act of coming; it is the eager petition for food and life; it is the very approach, hungry and poor and destitute and perishing, which constitutes the warrant, and brings the penitent within the limits of the promise. There are many other things in his state of mind, of course; but this is the only one specified. So that the application itself is the evidence; the very perception of our misery and our trembling efforts to reach the Saviour's feet, are our encouragement. The applicant is not

described as a penitent, though that is implied ; he is not described as a child of God, though that is implied ; but he is simply marked out by this, he is one that comes to Christ.

The expression, also, is couched in the singular number ; it is not, they who come ; or, all who come ; but, he that cometh ; thus promising favour, not only to the body of believers in general, but to every particular soul that applies itself to Christ. The eye of mercy seems to be fixed intently on the single individual, whoever he may be, in all ages, under every variety of circumstance ; whether he was before an idolater or a nominal Christian ; whether within or without the visible Church ; in whatever corner of the world ; however hidden from the observation of man—him that cometh to Christ shall in no wise be cast out.

2. *The strength of this negation* deserves notice. It does not simply deny, but denies in the strongest manner, and with a species of abhorrence ;<sup>1</sup> I will in no wise ; no, in no manner, cast out. I will not at first refuse to admit him into my family, nor will I afterwards cast him out, as Hagar and Ishmael were cast out by Abraham.

This strength of the negation precisely meets the strong fears of the anxious penitent, particularly on his first approaches to Christ. We are always solicitous about an object in proportion to our sense of our need, our idea of its value, our conviction of our own unworthiness. Under these circumstances we dread

<sup>1</sup> τὸν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς με, οὐ μὴ ἐκβάλω ἔξω.



every adverse appearance. We fear we shall be too late, too undeserving, too little acquainted with the manners of the person to whom we apply, too ignorant to understand his directions, or too weak to fulfil them.

So it is with the feeble, fainting, hungry soul that desires life and righteousness, the bread of God that cometh down from heaven. He is so sensible of his unworthiness, of his rebellion of heart against God, his ignorance, his ingratitude, his obduracy, that he fears he may be too great a sinner, that he may be coming in a wrong manner, or may be wanting in certain pre-requisites necessary for acceptance. And therefore our Lord opposes to these and a thousand other suggestions, the sweeping denial of the text.

“If you are cast out” (said the amiable and pious author of many devout religious publications,<sup>2</sup> more than forty years since, to him who now addresses you) “it must be in some wise; either because you are too far gone in sin, or too late, or too old, or too young; or on some other account. But Christ says, I will in no wise, in no manner, upon no account cast you out. If Christ had said, I will cast out none who come to me but ten or twenty of such a character and under such circumstances, then you might have feared that you were amongst the number of the excepted persons; but now the promise is general, universal, without exception; reciting only the act of coming, and denying the possibility of such an act being in vain.”

“Do poor scholars,” observes a pious writer of the last century,<sup>3</sup> “come to him to be taught; though they

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. John Newton.

<sup>3</sup> Henry.

be slow and dull, he will not cast them out. Do poor patients come to him to be cured ; though their case be bad, he will not reject them. Do poor clients come to him to be advised ; though they come empty-handed,\* he will in no wise cast them out."

3. But, in truth, *the promise extends further than the words may at first seem to import.* It implies more than it expresses. By a very usual figure of speech, we convey our meaning every day in terms less forcible, abstractedly considered, than we intend, or than others understand them.<sup>4</sup> The promise includes not only the not rejecting, but the receiving with favour. Not only will Christ not cast out him that cometh to his banquet, as the master of the feast cast out the man that had not on a wedding garment, or as the foolish virgins were cast out, when they had gone to buy oil for their vessels, and the bridegroom had come and had shut to the door ; but he will welcome them to his house, receive them amongst his guests, and place before them the most refreshing and copious provisions. He "does exceeding abundantly above all that they ask and think." Yes, he sends out "his servants at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready ;" he sends off other servants "into the streets and lanes of the city, yea into the highways and hedges, to compel them to come in, that his house may be filled." Him that cometh shall, so far from being rejected, "sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God."

<sup>4</sup> Meiosis.

The form of the expression turns on the not casting of the penitent out, because that is the immediate object of fear. The first thing is, not to be at once refused. Subsequent blessings—pardon, reconciliation, peace, illumination, grace, holiness, joy, strength, are another question. These are not so directly in the view of the supplicant ; many of them he may not fully understand ; but he understands this, that if he is at once rejected, all is lost ; whereas if he is not cast out, but is admitted amongst the favoured guests, every thing else may follow.

The full encouragement thus intended to be conveyed is so important, that one of the main offices of the minister of religion is to console dejected and trembling minds. It is as difficult to persuade the penitent of his being in the right path to life, as it is to convince the impenitent of his not being so. Presumption and self-confidence are so completely overthrown when God shines with grace into the heart, that distrust and fear are apt to succeed.

4. Consider then *our Lord's uniform character*. How did he treat those who applied to him when on earth ? What petitioner did he refuse ? Whom did he cast out ? Was it the nobleman who thought himself unworthy that Christ should enter under his roof ? Was it Jairus, whose daughter he raised ? Was it the widow of Nain, whom, before she even applied to him, he addressed, as she was weeping over her only child ? Or the woman of Canaan, or the sisters of Lazarus ? Or was it Mary Magdalene out of whom went seven devils, and who came behind him at the table and washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of

her head, and brake her box of ointment and poured it over his head ; and whose pious act, when the Pharisees murmured, he declared should be told for a memorial of her, wherever the gospel should be preached over the whole world ?

And did our Lord's parables speak the language of rejection ? Was it the king who cast out the invited guests ; or they themselves, who " made light of " it, and prayed that they might be " excused ? " Does the joy of the shepherd over his recovered sheep, and of the woman over her piece of silver, mark any want of compassion towards returning penitents ? Does not our Lord expressly interpret this by saying, that " there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth ? " And in the exquisite parable of the prodigal son, is the father represented as indifferent to the penitent youth ; did he reject his suit ; did he delay his reception ; did he yield to the reproaches of the elder brother ? Did he not, when he was yet a great way off, descry him, and have compassion on him, and run and fall on his neck and kiss him ? Did he not interrupt the confession his son began to make, in order to put on him the best robe, and a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet, and have the fatted calf prepared, that they might make " merry and be glad, because this his son had been dead and was alive again, and had been lost and was found ? "

Indeed, reflect only on the meek, benignant character of our Lord ; his gentleness, his humility, his patience, his lovely carriage. Represent to yourselves his mild and gracious eye ; mark the placid dignity and deeply-seated compassion of his countenance ; catch

the sweetness of his voice and action ; suppose him to be now in the midst of us at this time, as he was amidst the unbelieving and scoffing Jews when he uttered the words of the text, and as he is spiritually in our assembly now. Listen to his accents of mercy. He stands and cries, “ Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” And can you fear a rejection ? No ; my brethren. He “ came to seek and save them that were lost.” “ His name was called Jesus,” Jehovah the Saviour, “ because he was to save his people from their sins.” He was born to save, he taught to save, he died to save, he rose to save, he lives to save ; and shall you—can you be cast out ? No ; “ heaven and earth shall pass away, but Christ’s words shall not pass away.”

Two things you must however bear in mind.

Delays may be interposed in your receiving the full desires of your heart. This was the case sometimes on earth. The Syrophœnician suppliant was for a time apparently, and only apparently, refused. St. Paul informs us, he sought the Lord thrice for the removal of the goading thorn. These delays are to prepare us for receiving aright the ultimate blessing ; they are to humble the conceit of our hearts ; they are to make us more sensible of our need ; they are, like the woman before the unjust judge, to awaken our importunity ; they are to lead us to distinguish and mark the mercy when granted ; they are to render joy and peace safe and holy ; they are to prepare us for glorifying our Deliverer and estimating his immense love. If we can but continue praying, coming, seeking, knocking, we shall at length find. Nay the very fact of our being able to pray and wait, is itself a consequence of grace

received in answer to our former supplications. Delay is one thing, rejection is another.

There may be also much anxiety and infirmity of faith, and many distressful feelings in those who have been received by Christ and admitted as accepted guests to the banquet. Joy is not the only grace to be wrought in the penitent's mind. There are many other things to be done there. Christians go on for years before anxious forebodings are strangers to their breast. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

The manslayer, when he had attained the city of his refuge, might have many shudderings of soul still, lest the avenger of blood should enter. He had also to watch carefully afterwards, lest he should be tempted to pass beyond the city before the death of the high priest. A man may be escaped from a shipwreck and be standing on a rock, and yet from agitation and confusion he may think that the rock shakes, and that he shall perish in the waves. A criminal may have a bond containing a royal pardon; and yet from fear and apprehension he may be unable to read it with calmness, and derive all the consolation from it to which he is entitled.

The direction in all such cases is, to go on; to pray without ceasing, to forsake known sin, to do known duty, to attend diligently the means of grace, to watch against the lusts of the heart and the temptations of Satan; to obey the counsel of ministers; to follow the light of conscience and the guidance of holy Scripture. Thus will Christ at length appear "full of grace and truth." Already he has not rejected you. Already he

has received you. Ere long he will console, as well as bless. Ere long he will so shine into your mind, and enable you so to read the scriptural "witness of the Spirit," that you will go on your heavenly way in peace and hope. In the meantime, let it ever be engraven on your heart, that Christ in no wise casts out him that cometh unto him for the bread from heaven; but is infinitely more willing to admit us, than we can be to come to him; and rejoices more in giving, than we can do in receiving the blessing of salvation.

But there is, in truth, one class of characters whom Christ will reject—and with this thought I conclude. He will cast them out at the last day, who refuse his invitations now. They who will not have Christ to reign over them, who reject his offers, despise his gospel, make light of the heavenly banquet, must abide the fearful consequences. He will hereafter say of them, "As to those mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring them out and slay them before me." Deliberate, therefore, I pray you, now in time. Hear once again with serious attention the accents of grace. Come ere it be too late. Knock ere the door be closed for ever. "Seek ye Lord, while he may be found, call ye upon him, while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

## S E R M O N VI.

JOHN xiv. 26.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

MAN is in himself a comfortless, wandering, creature. This almost all feel and acknowledge; but few know that the sorrows of mankind are only the symptoms of a disease which lies deeper in the circumstances of a fallen world; and that Christianity reveals the only effectual remedy for them in the sacrifice of our Lord, as applied by Him who bears the name, and executes the office of the Comforter.

If there be any thing which can demonstrate the tendency of the gospel to promote human happiness in every sense of the expression, it is this revelation of an inward Teacher and Comforter.

Three things, indeed, we manifestly want in order to regain the path of truth and peace. We need a clear and decisive revelation of the being and perfections of the one living and true God; we require a distinct direction as to the way of pardon and acceptance; and we want an inward principle of love to God and goodness; something to set the machinery of salvation, so to speak, in movement, and to give it internal force and success.



The two former requisites are met, as we have already seen, by the proclamation of the jubilee of the world,<sup>1</sup> by the great mystery of the gospel,<sup>2</sup> by the doctrine of atonement,<sup>3</sup> the call to repentance,<sup>4</sup> and the encouragement to every penitent to come by faith to its divine Author.<sup>5</sup>

The third necessity we shall now find to be supplied by the doctrine of the Comforter, of whom our Lord discourses largely in the chapters connected with that from which the words are taken. We shall divide our observations into the two parts which the tenor of that discourse points out; and consider, first, the doctrine of this inward Comforter, as it respects the names and titles he bears; and, secondly, as it regards the blessed Saviour, through whom he is vouchsafed.

May "the Lord the Spirit" vouchsafe to us his gracious presence, that by his "holy inspiration we may," on this subject of all others, "think those things that be good, and by his merciful guiding perform the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

I. In considering the chief names and titles of the divine Author of grace, it will be sufficient to confine ourselves to four: The Holy Ghost, as the Spring of holiness; The Comforter, as the Source of consolation; The Spirit of Truth, as the Teacher of the heart; The Lord and Giver of Life, as implanting a new and heavenly Nature.

1. Together with the first title, The Holy Ghost, we consider various names of like import; The Spirit,

<sup>1</sup> Sermon I.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon II.

<sup>3</sup> Sermon III.

<sup>4</sup> Sermon IV.

<sup>5</sup> Sermon V.

the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Lord the Spirit; which are terms applied to him, because he is that self-existing and independent Spirit, possessed of all the infinite perfections of deity, who, "with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified."

The personality and deity of the Spirit involved in these titles is proved just as the atonement, pre-existence, and deity of our Lord, or as the Fall of man, or any other of those main doctrines in which Christianity consists, are proved by the uniform language of Holy Scripture in its plain, logical meaning.

In speaking of the blessed Spirit, the inspired penmen describe a self-subsisting, active, divine, and personal agent; one who "commands" and "sends;" who "testifies" and "speaks;" who "wills" and "chooses;" who is capable of grief and joy; who "strives" and "pleads" with men; who "divides gifts to every one severally as he wills;" who "searches the deep things of God;" against whom blasphemy is the sin irremissible; who dwelling in us makes us "temples of God;" concerning whom a lie uttered, is a lie "not unto men, but unto God;" and to whom the most solemn acts of religious worship are, equally with the Father and the Son, addressed; baptism and continual benediction—"Baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost;" "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

A detailed proof of the personality of the Holy Ghost is found in our Lord's discourse, of which our text is a part: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom

the Father will send in my name." "I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth." "He shall teach you all things." "When the Comforter is come, he shall testify of me." "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin," &c. Here is an express promise of a divine visitant or agent; who should be another and second personal Comforter to the disciples, even as our Lord himself had been, during his abode on earth, the first: who should be sent, who should come, who should teach, who should bear witness and reprove the world, who should abide with the Church for ever.

Now if all these direct personal acts mean nothing more than the influence or power of God, the language is harsh and unnatural in the extreme, and contrary to all the fixed usages of human speech. Our Lord does not merely promise instruction, but one who should instruct, as one of my eminent predecessors observes;<sup>6</sup> not comfort, but a Comforter; not knowledge, but the Spirit of truth; not conviction, but a reprover; not assistance, but one who should dwell and abide for ever. If this grave, unadorned, solemn language of our Lord in his last discourse with his disciples, be interpreted as a mere poetical figure, all the meaning of the Bible is thrown into doubt. Poetical figures are known by the manner of their introduction, their circumstances, and the whole context; and are as intelligible in their place as the most ordinary prose. But

<sup>6</sup> Bishop Heber.

a man might as well attempt to explain away the precise language of an act of parliament by loosely talking of poetical figures, as this parting discourse of our Lord.

The doctrine is indeed mysterious—"the mystery," emphatically, "of godliness;" for in what mode the three Divine and co-equal subsistences exist in the unity of the one eternal and almighty Potentate, we know not, we pretend not to know. But the fact we receive upon the authority of Divine revelation. No one, indeed, that reads the Bible with candour, can arrive at any other conclusion. If the doctrine of the tri-unity of the ever-blessed Godhead had never been reduced into the terms of a creed, every individual penitent would still frame the doctrine for himself, for his own faith, and to his own salvation. The systematic language of creeds was gradually forced upon the Church by the disingenuousness of heretics tacitly denying in different ages the Godhead of the Son and Spirit; they are outworks merely. The doctrine we teach goes beyond them, and reposes on the language of Scripture itself; and nothing but that language, conveying its obvious sense to every pious mind. We ask for nothing but the use of the express terms of holy Scripture.

It is not a little singular, that notwithstanding the objections of Arians and Socinians, bearing the Christian name, traces of the plurality of persons in the Godhead are found in all the most ancient mythologies of the heathen. The Hindoos, for example, believe in one God, Bramha; and yet they represent him in three persons; and they worship one or other of these persons in every part of India. Their most ancient repre-

sensation of the Deity is formed of one body and three faces. Whence this? It should seem they had heard of the Elohim of the first chapter of Genesis, "Let us make man." Every where in the East, there appears a counterfeit of the true doctrine. The inhabitants have lost sight of the one true God, and apply their traditional notions to their idols. But as the characters of the Mosaical ceremonial law pervade the whole system of the Hindoo ritual and worship, so the Hindoos also believe that one of the persons in their trinity (and that too the second person) was incarnate. Hence their fables of the incarnations of Vishnoo. The doctrine of a vicarious atonement for sin by shedding of blood is too prevalent all over the heathen world, for me to dwell upon it. And as to the influence of the Holy Spirit, it is asserted in the most ancient writings of the Hindoos, that "the Divine Spirit or light of holy knowledge influences the minds of men." And the man who is the subject of such influence is called, "the man twice born." Many chapters are devoted to the duties, character and virtues of "the man twice born."<sup>7</sup> We may truly say, then, to the Hindoo inquirers, "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare we unto you."

And let it be observed, that there is nothing contradictory to reason in the Scripture doctrine on this mystery, though there is much that is above it. The doctrine is practical, intelligible, important. Every part of the gospel which touches on this incomprehensible mystery, touches on it not as it is incomprehen-

<sup>7</sup> Christian Researches, by C. Buchanan, D. D.

sible, but in certain practical and intelligible respects, and with regard to certain benefits of redemption—in order to commend to us the love of God the Father ; the sacrifice and death of God the Son ; the sanctification of God the Holy Ghost for our own salvation. The mystery is only treated of in connection with these direct practical purposes. We are called to believe, trust in, love, obey, pray to, adore, praise God the Son for his immense love in dying for us and rising again. We here touch on salvation ; as we also do, when we are called on to rely on the inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit as the Spring of holiness ; to pray for his influence, to follow his monitions, to dread grieving or resisting him, to trust him as the invisible Author of grace and purity in the Church, and to cherish his favour as the seal and witness of our hope.

In this view, there requires only some measure of that true repentance unto salvation of which we spake in a former discourse, to dispose the mind to understand, welcome, and use to the practical purposes for which it was revealed, this blessed doctrine. Whilst, on the other hand, the rejection of it is the surest sign of general unbelief, and the necessary occasion of our losing all the benefits with which it stands inseparably connected.

2. But we pass on to the name of the Comforter, the source indeed of consolation to man. The word imports far more than our English term conveys. It means an advocate, a guide, a conductor, one who undertakes a cause. This is the especial work of the Holy Ghost in the economy of redemption. He under-

takes the cause of the humble believer, defends him, guides him with his light and counsel, strengthens him under sorrow, produces faith in his heart in the entire revelation of the Bible, but especially in the record which God giveth of his Son ; testifies of Christ to his trembling mind, and enables him to derive consolation therefrom ; and aids him in realizing the promises of grace. More particularly in times of persecution, sorrow, affliction, banishment, and peril of death, he pours in the balm of consolation, works patience and resignation to the Divine will, strengthens and fortifies the soul in faith and love, repels the incursions of temptation, and cheers with the anticipations of being for ever with the Lord.

3. With this office of the Spirit, the next stands connected : He is the Spirit of truth, as the great primary and internal teacher. “ He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

For such is the blindness, ignorance, and perverseness of the fallen understanding, that the mere words of Scripture will not teach, without the interior aid of grace. “ Then opened he their understandings,” it is said of our Lord after discoursing with his disciples, “ that they might understand the Scriptures.” “ The natural man,” says St. Paul, “ receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” And thus the Psalmist prays, “ Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law !” And the apostle testifies, that “ God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, had

shined" into the Corinthians' " hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." So to the Ephesians, "The éyes of your understanding being enlightened." And indeed the great evangelical promise, the new covenant, rests on this illumination: "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." And so our Lord, uniting the prophecy and the fulfilment, says, "It is written in the Prophets, They shall be all taught of God: every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me."

This internal teaching extends to all the truths of the gospel necessary to salvation, and so far as they are necessary to salvation. The humble penitent early discovers his need of this assistance to understand the Scriptures. A perception of ignorance and weakness is amongst the first effects of grace. He then begins to study holy Scripture in the light of the Holy Spirit; and thus gradually attains to all essential knowledge.

He is also taught by this Divine visitant to pray: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," saith St. Paul, "for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." No one has ever attempted to pray, without discovering his need of the Spirit's aid. The moment we are in earnest, we feel our inability to pray as we ought. We then implore the help of God the Holy Ghost, "praying in the Spirit," "praying in the Holy Ghost"—as the Scriptures speak.

As to the mode of this teaching, it is ever agreeable



to our moral and responsible nature; and in a gradual and imperceptible manner, not discernible, generally speaking, except by its effects, from the operations of our own minds. It is also in the diligent and humble use of means, and in the due exercise of our natural faculties. It is, moreover, always according to the written word of God in its true and obvious sense. It conveys no new truths to the mind, but enables us to understand the old truths which were previously in the Bible, and expressed in the plainest language, but which from blindness we could not before discern. “It is no less inaccurate,” observes Bishop Heber, “to suppose that in the ordinary course of things we receive any new ideas from the grace of God, than that our knowledge is derived from the lamp which lights our study. Like that lamp, it enables us to trace in the Bible the things which belong unto our peace: like that lamp, it helps us to renew the decayed impressions of knowledge long since obtained.”

This teaching is also uniformly productive of holy fruits: “The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.” “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance.”

Thus all enthusiasm, dreams, visions, impulses, are excluded; and the doctrine of Divine teaching appears, as it truly is, a most rational, sober, and scriptural truth—one of the great offices of the Holy Ghost.

I need not say that the inspired apostles were endowed also with the gifts, of the Spirit in an extraordinary and miraculous manner, for the first establishment of the gospel, and for the inditing of their sacred his-

tories and epistles for the guidance of our faith in all ages. They were “taught all things, and had all things brought to their remembrance” instantaneously and plenary, and without that gradual imperceptible operation, and the use of those means, to which we are bound.

4. But there yet remains another branch of the Holy Spirit's operations. He is not only the Holy Ghost, as the Spring of holiness; the Comforter, as the Author of consolation; the Spirit of truth, as the Teacher of the heart; but he is also, the Lord and Giver of life, as implanting in us a new and heavenly Nature.

“You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins,” saith St. Paul to the Ephesians. “Love is of God, and every one that loveth, is born of God:” “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” “Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin.” Such are the declarations of the beloved apostle. And so in his gospel, “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

This new and heavenly birth is a most striking metaphor derived from the natural one. An infant brought into the world is a new creature formed by Almighty God with vast powers and capacities, but in an incipient and feeble state. So the penitent is a new creature, as it were, brought into the spiritual world, with vast powers and capacities, but in a feeble and incipient state. The new birth is the commencement of that holy change in the bias and direction and use of all our faculties, whereby we begin to choose and

delight in God, and holiness, and Christ, and spiritual things. We were "carnal;" we were "at enmity with God;" we were "living according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;" and we "were by nature children of wrath, even as others." We are now "alive to God; we are now "reconciled;" we now "live not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" we are now "raised from a death of sin to a life of righteousness;" the "wolf is now become as a lamb, and the leopard as a kid."

This change, not in the faculties of the soul, but in the disposition, choice, and bias of those faculties, is so great in itself, as well as in its consequences, that no image can so naturally set it forth, as a new birth, a new creation, a renovation, a regeneration, a partaking of a Divine nature, a resurrection from the grave of sin, &c.

Of this mighty transformation the sacrament of baptism is the sign, pledge, seal, completion. We are "born of water and of the Spirit." "We are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." "We are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." "Baptism doth now save us; not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God."

Of this vast blessing, the new covenant chiefly consists: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, said the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds and write them in their hearts;" or, as it runs more fully in the prophet Ezekiel, "A new heart, also, will I give you; and a new spirit will I

put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

This heavenly birth gradually produces in the understanding, light ; in the conscience, rectitude ; in the will, just determination ; in the affections, spirituality ; in the temper, meekness ; in the life and conduct, benevolence and truth.

It is the recommencement of that life which Adam possessed before the Fall, when his Creator was his supreme delight, his object, his end.

Invisible and imperceptible, indeed, to us are all these operations of the Holy Ghost ; his inspiration, his consolation, his illumination and renewal of the heart : but they are not the less real and important. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," saith our Lord, "and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Without them, the religion of the gospel would fail of all real success : with them, it goes forth conquering and to conquer.

II. But it is time to proceed to consider the doctrine before us, *as it regards the blessed Saviour through whom the Spirit is vouchsafed.*

For it peculiarly meets the comfortless state of man ; it supplies Christ's personal absence ; it is the abiding support of the Church ; and it is the chief fruit of our Saviour's intercession.

1. It meets in a peculiar manner the comfortless state of man. The hearts of our Lord's disciples were full of trouble at the idea of his removal from them. They claved to a temporal kingdom. They had little notion of

a spiritual redemption. Their love to their Master was their principal characteristic. "Let not your heart be troubled," said he, therefore, to them; "it is expedient for you that I go away." "I will pray the Father and he shall send you another Comforter; I will not leave you comfortless"—orphans, destitute—"I will come to you" by my Spirit at the day of Pentecost.

In like manner, the name and office of a Comforter is peculiarly adapted to the Church in its comfortless and depressed moments. Times arise to every branch of Christ's Church and to each individual, when a Comforter, one to raise the dejected heart, to inspire firmer faith in Christ, to kindle love to him, and to excite hope and courage in his power and promise, is indispensable. The gracious title of a Paraclete bears the same relation to other doctrines, as our sorrows do to the remaining branches of our militant state.

2. But the Spirit stands connected with our Lord, also, as he supplies his personal absence. During our Saviour's ministry on earth, he was himself the Comforter, Guide, Advocate of his disciples. He taught them all things. He performed his miracles before them. He expounded his parables in private. He defended them when assailed. But what was to be done when he was no longer with them? Who was then to fill them with an adequate knowledge of the scheme of the gospel? Who was to inspire them with undaunted courage, boldness, and wisdom? Who was to dismiss from their minds the fear of the world, and dread of persecution? Who was to aid them in committing to writing the narrative of our Lord's life and the last development of his doctrines after his resurrection? Who was to di-

rect in founding the Christian Church, establishing its divers orders of ministers, administering discipline, answering difficult questions? Who was to supply the miraculous power needful for promulgating with palpable evidence the new religion? Who was to give success to the gospel in the hearts of Heathen and Jewish adversaries?

All this the Comforter performed as the representative of our Lord. Under his conduct, the New Testament was founded. He had no sooner descended on the day of Pentecost in the emblematic figure of cloven tongues as of fire, than the apostles became other men. They proclaimed at Jerusalem, and in the presence of his crucifiers, the resurrection of their Lord. Whatever Christ had been to them, or would have been to them, the Spirit was as his substitute; he supplied, and supplies still, the place of the absent Saviour.

3. But he became, also, the abiding Guide and Leader of the Church. "I will pray the Father and he shall send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."

One mark of the true Church is the presence of the Holy Spirit. All grace, all influence, all success, all life in the soul of man flow from him. As the air we breathe is essential to our natural life, so is the Spirit to our spiritual life. No reading can touch the heart, no prayer can be rightly offered, no sermons can be composed or delivered well, no ministry can be successful, no Church can stand, without the grace of the Holy Ghost. The incarnation and sacrifice of the second Person of the adorable Trinity were not more necessary to the scheme of redemption, than the gra-

cious operations of the third Person in applying that sacrifice, and aiding men to avail themselves of that redemption.

Thus the truth of the gospel is handed down from age to age ; thus a succession of ministers is qualified ; thus Churches are sustained and propagated ; thus missions are multiplied ; thus converts are made ; thus all the sacraments and means of grace are rendered efficacious ; thus prevalent declines in piety are stopped, heresies extinguished, and truth, the truth of Christ, revived.

It is in this way that, after eighteen centuries, the revelation of the gospel is as new, as powerful, as victorious now, as in the primitive ages ; because it has the ever attending power of the Holy Ghost in his ordinary and sanctifying influences.

Men wonder at the success of the simple doctrine of Christ ; men wonder at its effects on the hearts and lives of men ; men wonder that instruments so feeble should produce consequences so prodigious. They know not that we have a Captain, a Guide, a Defender, who by interior light and grace gives a blessing not our own. The strength and glory of the Church of Christ lie in this. She brings an invisible, and to the world unknown power to bear upon men. She is weak always, and often comfortless to the eye of sense. She is often stripped of human helpers. But she is strong in her Divine Comforter and Advocate.

The Church is never to be estimated by her external circumstances merely, her outward supports, the excellency of her creeds, the primitive authority of her Church order, her connection with the State which she

sustains by a reference to the supreme **Legislator**. All these things are good. There must be order ; there must be forms of worship ; there must be government in the Church. They “ that preach the gospel, must live of the gospel.”

But the strength of the Church is in her holy dependance on Divine aid. Without the Spirit she soon becomes comfortless, formal, cold, inefficient, proud, dead in the eyes of the omniscient Saviour. But when she is graced with the presence of the Comforter, all goes on well. She is built and compacted together on Christ. She is like a city that is at unity with itself. She spreads amongst the Heathen and Mohammedan nations. Christ is evidently with her, and “ the gates of hell can not prevail against her.”

4. But I must just observe, lastly, that the Holy Spirit's grace is the chief fruit of our Lord's intercession : “ I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter,” saith our Lord. For the Holy Ghost had not been given previously, “ because that Jesus was not then glorified.” Accordingly, the apostles declared, immediately after the day of Pentecost, that “ being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost, he had shed forth those things which the people saw and heard.” And St. Paul inquires, “ Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died ; yea rather, that is risen again ; who is even at the right hand of God ; who also maketh intercession for us.”

Thus the main blessing of the death and resurrection of Christ was that gift of the Spirit which was to give them their practical efficacy. We are now under



the dispensation and conduct of the Holy Ghost. As the incarnation of Messiah was the great hope of the Old Testament, so the Comforter is of the New.

*How admirably adapted, then, to the state of man is the gospel of Christ!* How admirably suited is this concluding branch of the scheme of salvation (for we have in this discourse completed the first great outlines of the redemption of Christ) to give efficacy to all the preceding, and stamp the whole with the seal of truth! What a noble, benevolent, practicable, divine project! Man a sinner, a wandering, weak, blind creature, is directed to deliverance, elevated by the development of a mystery hid from ages and generations, bound by the great act of Christ's atonement to love his fellow creatures, commanded every where to repent, assured of not being cast out by the tender-hearted Saviour, furnished with the aids and assistances of the internal Comforter, Teacher, and Sanctifier of the Church! <sup>1</sup>

Let us then *value aright this great gift!* Let us pray for the Holy Spirit for ourselves. If we once begin the care of our own salvation in earnest, we shall feel the need of divine assistance. Pray then for the Holy Ghost. Read the Bible depending on his influences. Perform all religious duties in the strength of the Spirit. Attend public worship, relying on his illumination, consolation, divine inspiration. Regard not the contempt and ridicule of the world. It knoweth not this divine visitant. It scorns what it does not under-

<sup>1</sup> Sermons I to VI.

stand. But make the blessed Comforter your Guide and Captain through the warfare and miseries of this mortal life.

Remember, also, that the *difference between the pretences which the enthusiast makes to the Spirit, and the humble trust of the penitent believer, is to be discerned in the different fruits produced.* A gentle, meek, spiritual, loving, teachable, stedfast temper is as surely the proof of the blessed Spirit's teaching, as pride, conceit, worldliness, party-spirit, fickleness is of the contrary.

Finally, *unite continually in devout prayer for a larger effusion of the grace of the Holy Spirit.* A most hopeful sign of coming grace would be more earnest and general supplications for it. Several years since a beloved friend of my own,<sup>1</sup> called the attention of the Church to the necessity of prayer for the Holy Ghost. Much good followed the appeal. Allow me to request you to act upon it. Let some evening in each week<sup>2</sup> be the especial season for earnest, private and social prayer for this greatest of all gifts; and especially as respects India, where our feeble numbers and feebler health can do absolutely nothing without the quickening energies of grace; but where all may be done, should God be pleased to vouchsafe to us the copious showers of his Spirit.

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. H. Stewart, incumbent of one of the new churches at Liverpool.

<sup>2</sup> The evening of Saturday may perhaps be suggested.

## S E R M O N VII.

## P S A L M L. 21.

These things hast thou done, and I kept silence ; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself ; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

HAVING contemplated the great scheme of redemption in our six preceding discourses, and having shown it to be full of benevolence to man, we proceed to the SECOND MAIN DIVISION of our entire course, and shall endeavour to trace out *the practical application of redemption to the human heart* ; in which the same features of Divine compassion will be apparent.

As many of the most fatal mistakes in personal religion arise from inadequate or false conceptions of the Divine character as revealed in the gospel, we begin here. The ministers of Christ must use every exertion to correct such fundamental errors as affect the whole application of Christianity ; and this is one. False views of God's existence, attributes, authority, law, are the source of the superficial and external religion of too many professed Christians ; and are peculiarly dangerous in heathen lands, where innumerable false notions float about, temptations to a weak faith abound, and the very being, and perfections of God are perpetually assailed.

This is the topic suggested by the words of the text, in which the Almighty, after exposing the folly of men in relying on external observances to the neglect of inward religion, and after taxing the ungodly with some of their more glaring provocations; proceeds to arraign them for those false conceptions of his glory and sovereignty from which their impenitence sprung. They imagined God to be such an one as themselves; they thought his delay in punishing arose from similar causes as in human judicatures; and they totally forgot the future tribunal before which they would have to appear: "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee."

Let us point out, then, the danger of false conceptions of the Divine character, by considering,

The extraordinary weight which Revelation gives to the true idea of the ever-blessed God—this is the primary proposition.

The tendency of fallen man to low and unworthy thoughts of him—this is the danger.

The direct and fatal consequences of false views of God on every part of practical religion—this is the reason for urging both.

1. The whole Bible is a manifestation of God. Revelation begins and ends in the person, the majesty, the attributes, the will of God. All redemption springs from the glorious character of the one true God. The Scriptures take for granted his existence and perfec-

tions, as impressed on the heart of man at his creation, or revealed to him in Paradise, and then proceed upon this footing. God is everything. "The heavens declare his glory" "His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." This lies at the foundation of all doctrine, precept, promise, threatening. The attributes of God are illustrated, displayed, made tangible, in all his dispensations, as the first and most important topic.

There is one, and only one, living and true God. This is the first axiom of Revelation—a glorious, self-existent, independent, eternal Being, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power and goodness; and who, as the Maker and Preserver of all things, requires, and is entitled to, the supreme veneration and affection of man, his intelligent and responsible creature.

2. Accordingly all the descriptions of God's dealings with man, and all the language in which he is addressed, proceed on the existence of this only Potentate, and on his possessing these glorious attributes. This conveys the idea of the unspeakable importance of just views of his character. The language stoops, indeed, to our infirmities; that is, it is intelligible; but it stoops in order to raise up our ideas to some suitable conceptions of his glory, so far as our duties and interests are concerned. Further than this, Revelation proceeds not: much less does it lower the Deity to human folly and vice, as all heathen writings do.

Take, as an example, the noble Psalm from which the text is selected; "The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Hear, O my

people, and I will speak ; O Israel, and I will testify against thee ; for I am God, even thy God.” What majesty, what sublimity, what a suitable and becoming language for the great God ; how impossible to be misunderstood !

3. The harmonious and unvarying representation of the Divine character as given in every part of Scripture, under all circumstances, and in every dispensation, strengthens this argument. God is every where represented in one and the same majesty and holiness ; nothing changing, nothing inconsistent, nothing ambiguous, nothing degrading, nothing weak, nothing arbitrary, nothing like the Heathen or Mohammedan fate hanging over him ; much less any thing of the human infirmity, folly, and vice which the pagan mythologies constantly impute to their deities, and which utterly neutralize all the scattered fragments of sublimity or purity which their fables may contain. But there is in the Bible one and the same majesty, sovereignty, and power ascribed to the true God throughout ; one and the same holiness ; one and the same inflexible hatred of sin ; one and the same justice and truth ; one and the same wisdom, goodness, benevolence, mercy, love, compassion.

Much is indeed mysterious, much incomprehensible, but nothing unworthy of the infinitely holy God ; nothing contradictory to the faint rays of glory reflected in the works of creation, or impressed on the heart of man, or brought out in their effulgence in the various parts of holy Writ.

4. Further, the Bible calls on us to imitate God in his moral perfections, and places virtue in man’s conforming himself to his will. “ Be ye holy, for I am

holy." "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." "Be ye followers of God as dear children." "Be merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful."

5. The Bible, again, makes the love of this 'one glorious Being the first and paramount duty of man. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; this is the first and great commandment." And this it is which renders the mercy of the gospel so essential to us. For no thoughtful person can deny, either the reasonableness of this holy love to God, the centre of all loveliness, goodness, and truth; or man's perpetual defects in complying with it.

6. Revelation, also, represents the glory of God as the last end of all his acts and dealings with man. "God doth nothing," says St. Augustine, "but for his glory. If he thinks, it is for his glory; if he speaks, it is for the honour of his name and power. If he has created the world, the heavens and the earth, angels and men, it is to form creatures to praise him, servants to fear him, children to obey and love him, a people to serve him, a Church to honour him. Time and eternity are consecrated to him. The sun when it rises and when it sets, blesses him and praises him without ceasing. Why? He is the only God, the Most High, the Almighty, the Master of angels as well as men. The heavenly spirits are in glory; but it is the glory of God: they contemplate him, they adore him: his glory is the centre of all things."

7. In short, if there were no other internal evidence of the truth of Christianity but this one, the character

there given of the great God, and the stress laid on it ; and if there were no other mark of a tendency to the highest happiness of man in it, it would be of itself abundantly sufficient. Just as, on the other hand, if there were no other internal evidence in heathenism to convict it of a merely human origin, and of an injurious tendency upon all the interests of man, but the character there given of their gods, it would be enough. The inmost soul of man feels that the one God, the one only holy Lord of Hosts of the Bible, is the true and living Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Saviour, Judge of mankind. The inmost soul and conscience of man feels that the idols of the heathen must be the offspring of human folly or of perverted traditions of the one true God.

Let us then show, as we proposed,

*II. The constant tendency of fallen man to frame low and unworthy thoughts of God*—which constitutes the imminent danger against which we would solemnly warn you.

1. For to form becoming notions of the great God, is in itself difficult to man, even with all the aids of Revelation. For man is earthly : his ideas of invisible things are chiefly derived from external objects. From these he learns to abstract certain material properties : he then contemplates the abstract being he has formed, and proceeds to add intenseness to the immaterial qualities which this abstract being is supposed to possess : and thus he mounts up to the idea of a spiritual substance.

Thus it is with regard to the ever-blessed God. For



“God is a spirit :” “No man hath seen God at any time.” Man endeavours then to abstract from his conception of him every thing material and sensible—body, parts, and passions. He then adds to this notion all the natural and moral attributes which the Scripture ascribes to him. This he effects by removing, as well as he can, all defects from the power, knowledge, wisdom, justice, goodness, truth which appear in men ; and by adding all imaginable extent, elevation, purity, permanency, intenseness to these attributes. He next endeavours to annex the ideas of self-existence, eternity, independence, omniscience, omnipresence, to his previous conceptions ; and thus he approaches to some distant, but still immensely distant, idea of the divine Being.

To assist him in this, the Bible represents the supreme Being much in the way of negation : “God is not a man that he should lie.” He is “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.” “My thoughts,” saith the Lord, “are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.”

The Bible, also, describes the great God under characters familiar to man ; as a Father, a Friend, a Judge, a Legislator, a King, a Benefactor ; and it is in these relations that much instruction concerning his mysterious nature is conveyed. The sacred books also stoop to convey ideas of the dispensations of the Almighty by a resemblance to certain actions in man. “The Lord cometh out of his place to punish all the inhabitants of the earth.” “I will go down now,” saith the Lord, “and see whether Sodom hath done according to the cry which is come up to me.” “I repent me that I have made man.”

“I lifted up my hand to the house of Israel.” “I have cast all thy sins behind my back.” “Jesus standeth at the right hand of God.”

Notwithstanding all this, however, man, as an earthly creature surrounded by objects of sense, must ever have an immense difficulty in forming any adequate thoughts of a Being so infinitely exalted above him. Even angels can never reach the full idea of God. As to any original idea of the glorious God, man, even before the Fall, could only attain it by the aid of three things united,—the impress of God upon his heart in creation, that is, the idea of a supreme Being infixed in the conscience within; a divine revelation from without, either oral or written; and the illumination and grace of the Holy Spirit. In Adam, framed after the image of God, these things concurred.

2. But now the corruption of man's nature by sin, enhances inconceivably the danger of his entertaining unworthy and false conceptions of the divine character. For the original difficulties of the finite creature are augmented by a wrong bias of all his powers. The understanding, the queen of the soul, is filled with false images; the will, the great executive power, pursues mistaken objects of good; the conscience, the internal judge, is erroneous; the passions confuse and blind the intellectual powers. The original idea of God impressed on the heart is well nigh obliterated; the voice of creation with its wonders is unheard; revelation, if not wholly lost, is ill understood, neglected, perverted; the aids of the Holy Spirit are unknown, or unsought after; “all the imaginations of man's heart are only evil continually.”

Man is now too proud to confess his ignorance of God and seek the aids of grace: man is too full of a perverted self-love to place his supreme regard on God, though reason dictate and revelation command this duty; man has too good an opinion of his own merits and doings, his attainments, his knowledge, his intentions, his gratifications, ever to feel and confess fully his nothingness and guilt before the great God, and lie prostrate before him in real humbleness of soul; man is too fond of being independent, and too impatient of control, to submit unreservedly to the sovereignty, majesty, dominion of the almighty Potentate.

Here then are steady principles in man as a creature, and especially as a sinful creature, ever at work to confuse and lower his ideas of the one true God.

3. A third consideration augments the peril. The infinite holiness of the character of God, and his right over us; the spiritual homage of the understanding and heart which he requires; the nature of the worship which only is acceptable to him; his claims upon a reasonable being of supreme reverence and love; and the last judgment which he has determined to hold—all this indisposes this depraved and wayward creature to entertain scriptural thoughts of him. He does “not like to retain” such a “God in his knowledge;” “when he knows God, he glorifies him not as God.” The divine character is importunate and irksome to him; it implies a law which he does not love; it implies moral inspection; it implies restraint upon the passions; it implies guilt and criminality in his neglecting and provoking such a Benefactor; it implies that he is a sinner, and must turn from his sins with hearty re-

pentance, or else endure the wrath of this great God. The tendency of man therefore to false conceptions of the divine character is ever flowing on in a silent but mighty current, fed by these sources.

4. Even in countries where revelation is acknowledged and professed, men are still too prone to “think God altogether such an one as ourselves.” They interpret the Bible after their own measure; they lower things gradually down to their convenience and wishes. *Quicquid recipitur*, says the old maxim, *recipitur modo recipientis*—man’s reciprocity of the true notions of the great God is narrow and inadequate as a creature, perverted and distorted as a sinful creature, under all circumstances.

Take as an instance the omniscience and omnipresence of God. How little do men realise God’s presence. How constantly do they, like Adam, endeavour to hide themselves from him. How does every evil doer seek the darkness of the night to escape God’s detection as well as man’s.

Or, take the character of God as a Judge. They still “make God altogether such an one as themselves.” They see that human judges and tribunals are defective, weak, inconsistent; that there is much of ignorance, much of false and undetected testimony, much of partiality; they see results frequently at variance with what they should have been; they know there are many doors of escape, much chicanery; that courts of law are often an arena for the struggle of wit and skill against righteousness and equity; so that the worse becomes the better cause. Now all this they in some imperceptible way transfer to the tribunal of God. They flatter

themselves they may somehow or other escape, though transgressors of his law ; they hope to evade the notice, or elude the power, or conceal their intentions, from the knowledge of the King eternal, immortal, invisible.

Especially, as to human tribunals, delays in punishment are continually opening hopes of safety to the guilty. Time creeps on ; things are forgotten ; other matters press ; the wills of men relax ; witnesses die ; laws are changed ; extreme justice is not often insisted on after a lapse of years. And all this they apply to the supreme Judge : “ These things hast thou done, and I kept silence,” saith the Lord, and “ thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself.” “ I have held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not.” “ Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

5. In heathen lands, however, the case is infinitely worse. Idolatry is the first child of the Fall. Man with all his faculties and powers for discovering God and his duties to him, has in fact never found out God nor worshipped him, as an invisible and all-perfect Being, with his heart and understanding, as he ought. Idols, images, and other sensible objects have been had recourse to to deliver him from the anguish of spiritual worship to a spiritual Creator. He has ever called them, as he calls them now, helps and guides to a conception of the Deity. His heart having departed from the only true God, his plan has been to invent gods more agreeable to his ignorance and passions ; gods of wood and stone ; gods who will easily pardon his vices, and set a high value on his imagined virtues, and be

always propitious to him ; gods local and tutelar ; gods who are especially kind to himself and his sect and countrymen ; gods whom he can see and handle ; whom he can carry about with him, remove, break, avenge himself upon, destroy ; gods who are propitiated with external services, and leave the heart and life unmolested.

This tendency to base and degrading conceptions of the divine nature is so strong, that when man has invented new gods, he has no power of clothing them with any attributes deserving the least reverence. His god is "altogether such an one as himself," weak, proud, lustful, oppressive, unjust, cruel, open to flattery, capable of being cajoled, resisted, overcome. All is inconsistent, ambiguous, general. Any thing may be made out from the sacred books of idolaters. The most disgusting and impure histories are attached to their deities. Accounts the most contradictory of the same gods are to be found. Rites and modes of worship analogous to their lascivious and warlike deities ; and a priesthood claiming divine honours, whilst they themselves are sunk in debauchery and chicane, complete the mournful proof of the tendency to false views of God in fallen man.

6. The patches of good morals found in their sacred books ; the sublime shreds of sentiment concerning a supreme God ; the scattered prayers and adorations of elevated devotion ; the metaphysical notions of pantheism, of an all-pervading Deity of which every thing is a part, whilst he himself has neither attributes nor providence ; the extravagant pretensions of being absorbed in God ; the idea of all difference of moral

good and evil being obliterated by such abstractions, are all portions of the same tendency.

They are like the rhapsodies of infidels in Christian countries, when they talk boastingly of nature, the soul of the world, the principle of order, the powers of gravitation, the course of things, the mysteries of cause and effect, and a thousand other equivocal, unintelligible generalities, by which they virtually exclude the idea of a wise and authoritative Governor of the world, who enjoins the submission of all his creatures, requires their obedience, and will hereafter judge the world in righteousness.

But let us pass on to point out,

### *III. The direct fatal consequences of false views of God on every part of practical religion.*

Man is as the object of his worship. "They that make idols are like unto them," saith the Scripture, "and so are all they that put their trust in them." The true character of the God of the Bible, is the substance and stay and source of purity to the whole Christian religion; just as the false views of God in Heathenism, Mohammedanism, Infidelity, are the spring of all vice. Christians are good because of their conceptions of God, and in consequence of them. Men, not Christians, are wicked because of their false views, and in consequence of them.

And in proportion as the professors of the Christian religion sink in their individual notions of the great God, is their whole religion sapped and poisoned. This renders the warning of danger which we are now giving, so peculiarly important to us who are residing in this country.

1. For to begin with repentance, what necessity shall we see of this primary duty, if our conceptions of the God whom we have offended be low? There is not so great need of repentance. God is not so much provoked; he is not so angry, he will not execute his threatenings. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," said the royal penitent. No soul of man was ever brought to real contrition, till that soul beheld the face of God in his true majesty. So long as men think God "altogether such an one as themselves," and in proportion as they do so, they refuse to return, they go on in their sins, they frame excuses. As they forget the past, so they imagine God does. As they chiefly regard sins committed against society; so they think God. As they are not always sincere in their threatenings; so God. As they are swayed by fair professions; so God. As they judge favourably their own case, and impute their faults to circumstances; so God. As they remember not their own sins in their true aggravations, but excuse and palliate them; so God. As they compare themselves with others, and frame a relative justification; so they conceive God to do.

One end of the ministry of the word, therefore, is to scatter these vain refuges, and bring God in his real glory and authority before the sinner's conscience; to show him the Divine Judge, and place him under his eye. Behold the culprit now trembling before the tribunal of his Judge! Behold the thoughtless sinner arraigned at the bar of omniscience! Behold the awakened transgressor grappling with the immediate terrors of the Almighty! "I have heard of thee by the hearing



of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

2. And where is the great mystery of the atonement of our Lord, if the scriptural character of God be forgotten or unknown ? Redemption proclaims the infinite holiness of God, supposes it, goes on the admitted truth of the divine justice, purity, righteousness. Without these, the idea of atonement is impossible ; and if they are lowered and obscured, it loses all its glory.

Nothing indeed so offends the pride and self-confidence and independence of the human heart, as the holiness and justice of God—not compromised, much less denied, not even limited in their scope and exercise,—but displayed, satisfied, exalted, glorified in the atonement of Christ. But nothing so cheers and delights the penitent, who views God's infinitely holy character, and estimates his own guilt, negligence, and ingratitude in the light of that matchless glory.

3. And where are the operations of the Holy Spirit ; what the necessity, what the place for them, if God be not indeed so infinitely pure as the Bible represents ? Why do men lower the doctrine of the mysterious birth of the Spirit ; why do they lessen the necessity of our becoming " new creatures," of our being " quickened from a death of trespasses and sins," of our being " partakers of a divine nature," of our having " a new heart and a right spirit ?" Why do they content themselves with a dead faith, dead privileges, dead works, a dead hope, a dead profession ? Because they have thought God " altogether such an one as themselves," and that therefore " a name to live whilst they were dead" might possibly suffice.

4. And where is prayer, if our conceptions of Him whom we approach are unscriptural? Who has not felt the difficulty of realising the divine presence, when addressing himself to him in secret, even when he has long cultivated the highest ideas of the glorious character of God? Who has not felt the arduous task of fixing his thoughts on God as he is? But if low ideas of that great Being are habitual to the mind, there can be no prayer; no heartfelt approach to God as a Father, for spiritual blessings. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is."

5. And what is our public worship, without God in his true character? If he be not a Spirit, why should we aim to "worship him in spirit and in truth?" But if he be "the King eternal, immortal, invisible;" if he be the "Father of our spirits;" if he be the object of adoration to the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven; if he be the one adequate, suitable, and glorious end of our being, of our affections, of our hopes; then to "go up to his courts" is the highest honour, as well as paramount duty, of his reasonable creatures.

6. And what will become of purity and truth in our domestic circles and the discharge of our public obligations, if the God of purity and truth be less glorious than the Scriptures represent him?

The main cause of the polygamy of Asia, with all its consequent pollutions and miseries, is the loss of the knowledge of the one holy and pure Creator and Lord of all. The main cause of the want of truth and fidelity in Asia, and of the prevalence of cunning, deceit, lies, is that there is no God of truth who tries the hearts of men, known amongst them.

In Christianity, all, all is God. The Bible is the book that goes to correct the strong tendency in fallen man to false conceptions of his glory, by insisting on the just character of God in every part of its revelation, and connecting with that character all the doctrines, all the promises, all the threatenings, all the duties of religion.

Let, then, *no slight nor perfunctory conceptions of the great God creep over our minds*, however prevalent amongst the heathens around us! Keep up in your hearts the just impression of the divine character. Remember that idolatry is no trifling sin; and that the departure of man's affections from God, and their transfer to the creature, is the sum and substance of this great provocation. Remember that all the evil in the world, whether professedly Christian or otherwise, springs from this one source—man's either visibly or in secret making a god after his own heart. Remember that he who entertains false conceptions of the Lord of all, lives in fact AN ATHEIST in the world. "God is not in all his thoughts;" he blots out God from his own creation. And can any thing, I ask you, be more provoking to the eyes of his majesty? What would a PRINCE think of his subjects, if he knew that they were all rebelling against him, and transferring their allegiance to his most fell adversary? Would a FATHER, think you, account it a small offence if his own children were to deny his character and right over them; to treat him with neglect or insult, and to shew reverence to any one rather than to himself? Would a HUSBAND call it a petty transgression, if his spouse

quitted his abode, and “scattered her ways” to every stranger?

Do not these and similar persons justly require, first of all, the love, the reverence, the allegiance of heart of those standing in the subordinate relations we have described? And yet these obligations are faint compared with those lying upon us towards our heavenly Sovereign, our divine Father, our rightful Bridegroom and Lord.

But because we forget all this, and frame loose notions of a God like unto ourselves, we think little of our guilt. We say, “Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?” We say, “We will not have this King to reign over us.”

Let us repent, then, ere it be too late. Let us return to our Father, our Benefactor, our Preserver, our Saviour, as revealed in the astonishing mercies of redemption in Christ Jesus.

Let us further learn to *adhere closely to the one Book which our almighty Lord has revealed to us* for our guidance as to his nature and will. Nothing has ever brought back any nation from idolatry to just ideas of the one true God, but THE BIBLE, and the influences of the Holy Spirit which accompany that book, and are confined, so far as we can observe, to the dissemination of its inspired record. Nothing has ever reformed decayed and idolatrous Christian Churches, but the Bible. The necessity of revelation, not only as once made known at the call of Abraham, or at the legation of Moses, or the promulgation of the gospel; but as perpetually propagated amongst a wandering,

lost world, as perpetually applied by the holy missionary recurred to by the pastors and ministers of the Christian Church, exalted and honoured as the one authoritative standard of truth, and perpetually employed as the sword of the Spirit for the individual conviction and conversion of the sinner, and the guard against false conceptions of the divine Being; this necessity is written as by a sun-beam on the whole religious history of mankind.

Let us "*set the Lord always before us,*" so that we may "*not sin against him.*" Let us be "jealous," exceedingly jealous, "for the Lord God of hosts." Let affronts put upon God be as "a sword in our bones." Let us realise a present God. Let us say, with Hagar, at every moment of temptation, "Thou God seest me." Let a holy awe fill our minds when the name of the Holy One is introduced. Let us "never take that name in vain," by a familiar, light, perfunctory use of it. In public and private worship, let us remember the great Being whom we approach. In troubles and afflictions, let us bear in mind who it is that chastens, and let us say with David, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, for it was thy doing." In all difficulties springing from the mysterious purposes of the Most High, or his unexplained operation, let us say with Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Especially, let us imitate God in his glorious character of mercy, love, compassion, forbearance, condescension! This involves all the divine perfections; God is LOVE. Let our ideas of him be so elevated and

scriptural in this respect, that we may “ dwell in love,” and thus “ dwell in God and God in us.” Whatever else we are, “ let us be merciful, even as our Father which is in heaven is merciful.” So shall we exhibit to all around the practical tendency of our holy faith. So shall we prepare for living a life of love to God and man upon earth ; and thus have the anticipation and seal of the perpetual bliss of the God of love in his immediate presence in heaven.

## SERMON VIII.

### ROMANS xii. 1.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

THE topic to which we now propose to direct your attention is, The reasonableness of the demand which Christianity makes upon man. For after having pointed out the danger of false conceptions of the divine character, it is natural for us to repel those charges of harshness and unreasonableness in the practical rules of religion, which such false conceptions have engendered.

What then is the demand which the gospel requires? And what are the grounds on which its reasonableness may be demonstrated?

1. *The demand then is, in truth, of no slight character.* It is no less than of a “sacrifice to be presented unto God”—and that, a sacrifice of ourselves, our bodies and souls: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.” This, and no less, is the demand which our text proceeds to declare to be our “reasonable service.”

The allusion is to the bodies of the sacred victims which were offered up to God under the Mosaical law. These sacrifices constituted a chief part of the "service of God" under that dispensation. They were of two kinds: the one, sacrifices of atonement; the other, of acknowledgment and dedication: the first, expiatory; the second, eucharistic: the one, offered for obtaining typically the pardon of sin, access to the ordinances of God, and reconciliation with him; the other, for expressing thanksgiving and praise.

The apostle therefore, alluding to this second class of sacrifices, calls on us, now that we are under the new and universal dispensation of the gospel, when the shadows and types are abolished, to present as our sacrifice of acknowledgment for all the mercies of redemption, not the animal victims which were accustomed to be offered, but our own persons, our bodies and souls, to be devoted to the service of God.

The main idea in such an act is the renunciation of our former right in the thing offered, and the resigning of it unto God. The sacrifices were put out of the power of the offerer, separated from all profane uses, and given up to God, to be disposed of according to his appointment. Thus we renounce, in this spiritual sacrifice, all the ordinary and profane uses to which our bodies and souls were devoted, and we give them up to God, to be spent and worn out in his service; and, if he should so appoint, to be resigned in martyrdom for his glory.

We are, indeed, already God's by right of creation; we are already God's by right of that supreme law which binds all responsible beings; we are yet more



his by right of that purchase of redemption which Christ once made; and we are also God's by the consecration of baptism, and the renewal of our vows, which most of us have made in our own persons at our confirmation. But all these bonds derive their due effect only from this voluntary sacrifice of ourselves to God's honour.

This dedication includes both body and soul; all the members of the body and all the faculties of the mind; the word, body, being employed in the text by an usual figure, for the entire person; and being here the rather adopted, because the apostle was alluding to the bodies of the animal victims offered under the preceding economies.

We are not however called hereby to any superstitious external macerations; we are not to immure ourselves in solitudes; we are not to retire from the bosom of our families; we are not to deny ourselves the moderate use of those creatures of God, which "are good, and nothing to be refused."

But we are to "yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God." We are "to glorify God in our body and in our spirit which are God's." We are to "avoid all appearance of evil, that we may be sanctified wholly, body, soul and spirit," and be "preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus." If our "right hand or our right eye offends us, we are to cut them off and cast them from us." We are to "mortify our members upon the earth," to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," and to employ our bodies and minds, as a devoted thing, to the glory and honour of God. We are to be willing to suffer

depression, pain, solitude, persecution, reproaches, contempt for his sake, and even to be “offered on the sacrifice and service of our faith.”

The body especially is to be engaged, as well as the mind, in the immediate service of God; the feet are to “run the way of his commandments;” the eyes to be “turned from vanity;” the hands to be “clean from taking of bribes;” the knees to be bowed before the God and Father of all in prayer; the tongue to resound his praises; the whole man to be separated from all profane uses, and accounted the peculiar property of our God.

But the apostle himself explains what he intends by this sacrifice, in the verses which follow the text: “And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” The great enemy to the spiritual dedication of ourselves to God is the world—Jewish or Heathen, that is, the visible and external people of God and idolaters—and the same world substantially now. So long as we mould ourselves after the fashion of the great body of our fellow creatures who are living in sin and folly, there can be none of this sacrifice of ourselves to God. The moment we begin in true repentance and lively faith to enter upon this offering, we no longer “conform” to the notions, schemes, pursuits, pleasures, estimate of good and evil, spirit, ambition, vain amusements, waste of time, eager craving for honour, wealth, and applause, and general “savouring of earthly things,” which constitutes “the course of this world.” But, on the contrary, we begin to be “trans-

formed," metamorphosed, made another sort of men, quickened to a new and heavenly temper, by the "renewing of our mind;" by the renovation of our understanding, will, conscience, and affections, by the Holy Spirit of God; so that we "may prove," make trial of, and experience, what is the really "good, holy, acceptable, and perfect will of God."

Such is the Christian sacrifice which we are called to offer. Feeble, indeed, are our best efforts, and imperfect our highest attainments; but this is what we are to aim at. This, amidst all difficulties and opposition, we are to struggle daily to present. This, whatever censure, ridicule, or enmity we may incur, we are firmly and habitually to resolve on. In this, whatever it costs us in regard of worldly interest or reputation, we are to persevere. This is the demand of Christianity.

Let us proceed then to consider,

*II. Some of the grounds on which its reasonableness may be demonstrated.*

For this demand of Christianity is, after all, "a reasonable service;" it is suited to rational creatures, and to their relations and obligations to almighty God. It is "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." It is a most proper, fitting, and rational thing, that creatures like us should not conform ourselves to this world, which is "at enmity with God;" but should, on the contrary, present our bodies as a sacrifice" of dedication to Him who is our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, our constant Benefactor, and our future Judge.

The dedicated animals under the Law, did not constitute a "reasonable service" at all, in the sense in which the word is here used. Those offerings were of brute creatures not endowed with reason, and not capable of performing any act with the mind or intellect. But our service under the gospel, the offering of our bodies and souls to God, is placed on the footing of our reasonable nature; is an obedience of the heart, mental and rational; suitable to human reason on the one hand, and the spirituality of the Divine nature, on the other. Mere bodily and corporeal services are now of no avail. God demands the rational and intellectual powers, the will, the understanding, the conscience, the affections.

Right reason acquiesces and approves of the dedication and sacrifice of every thing we have and are to the honour of our God. It is infinitely right and fit to engage ourselves unto the Lord; it is proportionate to his excellencies, and to our state and wants. The way of obedience approves itself to the mind of man, and is sanctioned by the approbation of his inmost soul. We then treat God as he is; we act agreeably to his nature and our relations to him. Till we do this, we act most irrationally; we "walk in a lie." Sinners who "conform themselves to this world," and refuse to dedicate their bodies and souls to God, choose a most unreasonable part; so unreasonable, that at the last day they will be condemned out of their own mouths; and conscience will goad them, as "the worm that never dies," with its keen but just reproaches through eternity.

But this is so important a branch of our subject, and

is urged so perpetually by the young as an occasion of objection against an immediate dedication of themselves to God, that we must consider it somewhat more at large. The grounds, then, on which we argue the reasonableness of these demands of Christianity, are the general properties of the Christian sacrifice, as laid down by the apostle in the text ; the motives by which he urges it ; and the scope given for the exercise of our intellectual faculties throughout.

1. For when we read that this sacrifice is "living, holy, acceptable to God," we perceive at once that *these are properties suited to the acts of our rational nature*. The sacrifices under the Law were neither living, nor holy, nor acceptable ; but on the contrary lifeless, external, temporary. They were insensible to the uses made of them, breathing out their lives in the act by which their slain limbs were presented by the worshipper, and incapable of further feelings or perceptions. But the sacrifices of the gospel are active, sensible, and voluntary in the uses made of them. They begin to breathe a new life, when the act of dedication takes place ; they are animated by the noblest principles of which the human nature, aided by grace, is capable. They live no longer to themselves, but unto God. They constitute our reasonable service.

Nor were the Mosaical sacrifices holy, except by an external, ceremonial, mechanical separation to God, as typical of the great sacrifice to be hereafter offered by the Messiah. But the bodies and souls of Christians are truly holy, not by a conventional exterior purity merely, but by an inward rational separation from sin

and all sinful and profane uses, and a dedication to God's special service in an intelligent and voluntary course of obedience and suffering. They are sanctified by divine grace; they are "the temples of the Holy Ghost;" they have an actual work of inward purification proceeding in them, and are bringing forth the positive fruits of holiness in their temper and lives.

Least of all were the bodies of the beasts offered under the Law "acceptable unto God" in themselves. They were of temporary appointment only, and had nothing in them to please an infinitely holy God. And even the ceremonial acceptance which, as types of the sacrifice of Christ, they had obtained, had vanished away at the dawn of the gospel. The evangelical and rational offerings of a dedicated Christian retain, however, more than all the acceptableness which attached to the Mosaical victims. God delights in the penitence and humble service of his believing people; they are the ends of his purposes of grace, the effects of redemption, the results of his own sanctifying Spirit, the preparations for his presence and glory.

All these properties, then, are marks of a reasonable service; they constitute that "good and acceptable and perfect will of God," which characterises the last and most spiritual dispensation.

2. But consider, again, *the motives by which the apostle urges the Roman Christians to make this sacrifice*: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." Now nothing is so agreeable to right reason as gratitude. It is a reasonable, a most reasonable thing, to return to a great and undeserved be-

nefactor such tokens of acknowledgment as correspond with his benefits.

What, then, are these “mercies of God?” The apostle had terminated the doctrinal and more argumentative part of his noble epistle in the preceding chapter,<sup>1</sup> by observing, that all the grand dispensations of God’s providence and grace were with unsearchable wisdom designed to issue in acts of mercy to the Jew and Gentile: “Even as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also not believed, that through your mercy, they also may obtain mercy.” It is therefore with a peculiar propriety that he begins his practical exhortations with this especial motive, “the mercies of God,” in his economies to Jew and Gentile.

In fact, the apostle’s whole preceding discourse, extending through the first eleven chapters, are full of the mercies of God—mercies in “his righteousness revealed from faith to faith;” mercies in his “righteousness without the Law, being manifested and witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, upon all and unto all them that believe; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;” that he might be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;” mercies that where “sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound;” mercies, that “sin shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under the law, but under grace;” mercies, that we “have

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xi.

not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father, the Spirit itself also bearing witness with our Spirit that we are the children of God ;” mercies, that “ all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose ;” mercies, that “ neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What claims then are not made upon the penitent by such considerations ? When he felt nothing, indeed, of his lost and ruined state as a sinner, and nothing of the need he was in of pardon, grace, and reconciliation to God, of course a sacrifice of himself to God could not appear to him a “ reasonable service,” in the sense in which it does now that new elements of reasoning are brought together, and gratitude for the mercies of redemption assumes its right place in his deliberations.

But, beside these general and transcendent mercies of God, the penitent has many special and individual blessings to re-peruse in the pages of his past history—that he was born in a Christian country ; inserted into the body of the Church by the sacrament of baptism ; instructed in the faith of Christ ; taught to pray and read holy Scripture, and sanctify the blessed Sabbath from his youth ; brought gradually to the serious perception of the claims of religion ; placed under the care of pious ministers ; awakened to spiritual life ; nourished by God’s word and sacraments ; kept hitherto in the



narrow path ; raised from sickness, and delivered from impending death.

Some of my hearers also may, perhaps, remember peculiar mercies of God in great emergencies ; in the day of battle, when death was making havoc all around ; in the hour of peril on voyages or journeys ; in the seasons of fearful temptation, when they might, but for “the mercies of God,” have been hurried without preparation into eternity. Thus the penitent goes on reviewing the history of his life, till he breaks out with one of our Christian poets,<sup>1</sup> and says,

When all thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys,  
Transported with the view, I'm lost  
In wonder, love, and praise.

Any returns we can make shrink into insignificance before such gigantic blessings. Any sacrifices, however painful, are beneath such benefits. The demand of Christianity is a most reasonable service.

3. But these considerations from the properties ascribed to the Christian sacrifice, and from the motives by which it is urged, will be further confirmed, if it should appear that in the details of the Christian religion *there is every scope given for the exercise of our intellectual and rational faculties* ; that wherever the reason of a finite, feeble, fallen creature can act aright, it is allowed and encouraged so to act.

To judge indeed of the nature or mode of existence of the eternal, self-existent God, would require infinite

<sup>1</sup> Addison.

powers ; and therefore here reason is silent. So as to all the peculiar discoveries of revelation, which can only be received as facts, upon the authority of the almighty Author of the religion. They are placed transcendently above its perceptions and powers, and lie immeasurably beyond the range of its contracted and ephemeral observation. Reason has no premises, no elements to work upon, no propositions to compare, nothing to deduce. It is sufficient to say here, that nothing is contained in Scripture in contradiction to the glimmering rays of Reason ; that all is in harmony with the lights she furnishes ; and that as to the ends for which these mysteries are revealed, they are completely and obviously adapted to our rational powers, and to our state and wants in this world.

But how wide is the field still which stretches on all hands for the due exercise of our reason.

The whole mass of the evidences of Christianity is addressed to the understanding of man. The authenticity, credibility, inspiration and divine authority of the Scripture rest on far stronger reasons than men are governed by every day of their lives, in all their most important concerns.

The just interpretation of the record is the province also of Reason, which explains human language by human rules ; compares all the parts of Scripture together ; gathers the import of difficult passages from the more obvious meaning of parallel ones ; and explains the various forms of speech—metaphors, parables, types, analogies, by fixed logical rules, employed every day on the one hand, in the decisions of law, the preparation of legislative acts, and the testimony of

history; and on the other, in the interpretation of hyperbolical and poetical imagery.

The details of Christian duty are, again, left much to the judgment of man. The Bible is a book of principles; it lays down main truths chiefly. It is a spirit of laws, not a mere code. It includes all needful matters in the compass of a small volume. All the ten thousand points of application are left to the study and care of the pious mind. How reasonable is all this!

Then God places man in the midst of a system of means, in which each one is dependent on the aid of others; where grace is to be obtained; where man's reason and conscience may be perpetually set at work in the most legitimate manner.

The revelation of the Bible, also, is a religion that acts by knowledge, motives, the exercise of foresight, the records of memory, the dictates of experience; not by brute force, not by mere authority, not by terror; but by the rational powers of man.

The first influences of grace, again, fall like light on the understanding, so that the reason being unfettered, we may exercise it in a right and beneficial manner—an unerring mark of a reasonable religion.

There are no petty personal ends encouraged; no enthusiasm; no party-spirit; no malice; no prejudices against adversaries; no persecution; no priestcraft; no external services separated from the worship of the Almighty with the understanding; that is, all is calm, instructive, straight-forward, reasonable.

The ritual of Christianity, once more, is as light as possible, agreeably to the last and universal religion. The holy Sabbath—itsself a commanding proof of the

reasonableness and benevolence of Christianity ; the blessed Scripture ; the public worship of God ; an order of men from the days of the apostles separated for the spiritual consolation of their fellow creatures ; two sacraments, and two only, as seals and pledges and memorials of the two main branches of the religion, sanctification and justification, holiness and pardon ; these constitute its ritual.

And here I should be wanting in my duty, if I did not observe that our Anglican protestant reformed Church presents us with a “service” which we may truly term “a reasonable” one ; having cut off those impositions and traditions of men which during the dark ages had imposed an unreasonable burden on the conscience, and yet having preserved the usages of pure primitive antiquity, she just holds the middle course between a religion without any aids of creeds and liturgies, or any adequate subordination and authority in her ministry ; and that in which superstitions and will-worship endanger the salvation of souls, and generate a perpetual decline into irrational and merely bodily exercise.

Then Christianity will have “mercy and not sacrifice,” where the two are at any time incompatible. She dispenses with her rites, when infirmity, sickness, absence, deaths of ministers, unavoidable impediments occur. She allows works of necessity and mercy on her sabbath. Her service is reasonable.

Her most painful injunctions are also dictated by the soundest wisdom as well as compassion. She demands of us the sacrifice of body and soul to God. But wherefore ? Because we have fallen from our original

righteousness ; because we are propense to forbidden objects ; because we are guilty, enslaved, blind, erring creatures. What would never be thought of by a person in health, and never be urged upon him, may be, and is perfectly reasonable for one sinking with disease. To a shipwrecked mariner that becomes most reasonable, which would be contrary to common reason, were he sailing with a favouring wind. A prisoner condemned to die by the laws of his country, may, and ought in reason to sue for pardon and submit to whatever conditions his prince imposes. Thus all the self-denial of Christianity, its penitence, its difficulties, its afflictions, its separation from the sins of the world, its humility, its vigilance, its holy fear, are most reasonable under the circumstances in which man is placed, and with the eternity which is before him.

Finally, Christianity goes on perpetually enlarging the field of knowledge to man, perpetually opening new scenes to his contemplation and wonder, constantly strengthening the conviction of the reasonableness of her service through life ; and then unfolding the golden gate of light in the heavenly world, when he shall no longer see “through a glass darkly,” but “know even as also he is known.”

Let me, then, in conclusion, *enforce the affectionate language of the apostle, and beseech all who are before me*, to “present their bodies a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice unto God, which is indeed their reasonable service.”

Especially, let the young be attracted by this invitation. Never do young persons act so wisely, so rea-

sonably, so becoming their intellectual and moral nature, as when they devote themselves unto God. Conscience, if you will allow it to speak, testifies to the importance of religion. Nothing so irrational as an ungodly life. Nothing so irrational as to provide for the present momentary scene of existence, and forget the future and permanent one. Nothing so irrational as to care for the body, and disregard the mind. Nothing so irrational as to live an animal, sensual, degrading life, whilst possessing an immortal soul, a revelation of mercy, and a call to spiritual religion.

Pause, then, in the career of your ingratitude to God, and of your carelessness as to your best interests. Turn now to Him who bids you to devote yourself to his service. Listen not to the objections of infidelity, follow not the example of a misjudging world; but consider the reason of things. Act as you would under similar circumstances in external matters. Take the cautions given you; compare things together: consider the end of this fleeting scene; act upon the intimations of conscience and the commands of God. Thus shall you become yourselves willing witnesses of the reasonableness of the demand which Christianity makes upon man.

Prepare, in the next place, for that solemn mysterious act of dedication, in which God has condescended to come down and aid your feeble faith—*the communion of the body and blood of our Lord Christ*. This sacrament is the bond of our self-sacrifice; the seal and channel of grace; the accomplishment of our vows; the open profession of our consecrating ourselves

to God. Let the young then prepare for this outward and visible sign, appointed by Christ "for the strengthening and refreshing of their souls by the body and blood of Christ, even as our bodies are by the bread and wine." Nor can we use better words in doing this, than those provided for us by our Reformers in allusion to our text: "And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee."

Let me next be permitted to remind the impenitent and careless sinner, that if he do not present himself as a sacrifice to God, *he will assuredly become the miserable sacrifice and victim of Satan and sin.* There is no middle course. A sacrifice you must be, either to almighty God, or to the malicious usurped sovereign of this world. Religion will, indeed, cost you much; but the want of religion will cost you infinitely more. "The way of transgressors is hard." The sacrifices you make to folly, pleasure, pride, ambition, display, lust, are infinitely more painful than any which Christianity calls on you to offer. Health, ease, conscience, reputation, inward peace, are continually sacrificed by the ungodly on the shrine of Satan. God only calls on you to part with that which is injurious both to body and soul; and offers you his grace to make his "yoke easy and his burden light." And eternity is at hand. What wages will the service of sin then yield? Now then, awake to reason, truth, wisdom, consideration, ere it be too late.

Lastly, let us endeavour gently to win *over the Heathen and Mohammedans to our reasonable religion*, our merciful our mild, our compassionate religion, by our characters, families, and worship of God. Let us take all fit opportunities of pointing out that Hindooism and Mohammedanism are without a single evidence for a rational being to repose on ; without any motives adapted to reasonable and immortal creatures ; without any revelation to man of the great matters which he most wants to know ; without any authoritative rule of moral duty ; without any order of men for the instruction of the poor and sorrowful ; without any holy Sabbath ; without any ritual, pure, edifying, rational. And thus let us wait till God, blessing our labours and those of holy missionaries, “The gentiles shall come from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.”



## SERMON IX.

## EPHESIANS iv. 20.

But ye have not so learned Christ.

WE have in these words of the apostle one of those pregnant expressions which are a compendium of the gospel; which are, on the one hand, so brief that a child may remember them; and which yet, on the other, like a principle in natural science, may be applied to every variety of detail.

In order to enter into it aright, it will only be necessary, as in the case of almost all very brief and comprehensive sentences, to consider well the connection in which it stands.

St. Paul is exhorting his converts at Ephesus, in the first verses of the chapter, to walk worthy of their high vocation, to preserve the unity of the spirit, to conduct themselves suitably towards the ministers of God, to shun novel and strange doctrines, and to be "compact-ed" more and more into the one body of Christ.

He next proceeds to enforce these rules by cautioning them generally against the imitation of the heathen, in either their spirit or their conduct: "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alien-

ated from the life of God because of the hardness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

He then introduces the words of the text, for the purpose of contrasting all this darkness and impurity with the genuine effects of the gospel. And afterwards proceeds to show what that humility and holiness are which follow the real grace of Christ: "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

He then closes the chapter by urging the particular duties which constitute the "walking worthy of their vocation;" such as truth,<sup>1</sup> moderation of anger,<sup>2</sup> integrity,<sup>3</sup> generosity,<sup>3</sup> purity of conversation,<sup>4</sup> the subjugation of those malignant passions<sup>5</sup> which peculiarly grieve the Holy Spirit of God,<sup>6</sup> and the cultivation of those tender affections which become those who hope that "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them."<sup>7</sup>

The full import of the expression of the text is now easily gathered: "Ye have not so learned Christ" as the false professors of Christianity have learned him, which the vices of themselves and their disciples too sadly prove; but ye have learned him in another and better

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Ver. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Ver. 31.

<sup>6</sup> Ver. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Ver. 32.

manner, the correspondent fruits of which you are continually producing.

The subject, then, to be now considered is,—The chief marks of distinction between the true and false method of learning the doctrine of Christ ; which we shall persue in the order laid down, as we have seen, by the apostle ; in whose words three things are implied—that there is a certain pre-eminent excellency in the person and doctrine of Christ ; that there is a wrong and inefficient way of learning this great lesson ; whilst there is also an opposite and right manner of acquiring it, so as really to attain the ends proposed therein by God our Saviour.

I. The language of the text supposes that *there is a certain excellency in Christ*. There must indeed be something distinguished, something remarkable in him, or the apostle would never have comprehended the whole of the gospel in this one word. Upon any other supposition, “to learn Christ” would have been an unintelligible form of speech.

For this is not the only place where the word is thus used : “We preach Christ crucified ;” “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ ;” “Ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord.” “Christ is all and in all,” are similar expressions.

Passages of this kind must import that there is an excellency in the person and doctrine of our Lord which render it natural to express the whole of Christianity in this summary manner. He is, in fact, the great lesson we have to learn, whether we consider the glory of his person, the extent of his benefits, or the perfection of his example.

1. Christ is to be studied in *the glory of his person*. We must learn Christ; that is, we must learn all that the Scriptures testify of him; of his divine person, of his relation to his heavenly Father before the world was, of his incarnation, of his attributes and power as Mediator, of his glorious resurrection and kingdom, of his dominion at the right hand of God, and his coming to judge the quick and the dead. Vast is the lesson here to be learned. It comprehends no less a mystery than that "He, who was with God and was God," "made himself of no reputation," and "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" and that now "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

2. Christ must be understood and learned, also, *in the extent of his benefits*. "He is made of God to us," says our apostle in another place, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Wisdom, by teaching us by his word and Spirit all things essential to our peace as they are revealed in the gospel. Righteousness, as being "Jehovah our righteousness," as the prophet terms him, who by his merits and obedience unto death brought in "everlasting righteousness;" so that the penitent sinner, relying humbly upon him, may be accounted and dealt with as righteous, yea, "the righteousness of God in him." Sanctification, by sanctifying us by his Spirit through the truth; implanting the principles and motives of holiness in our hearts by internal grace, and making us "new creatures" in him; "old things having passed away, and all things having become new." Redemption from death and the

grave ; from all the bondage and thralldom of sin ; from our spiritual enemies ; from every sorrow and conflict ; and at last, when all other enemies are vanquished, vouchsafing us the “redemption of the body.”

What an extensive lesson this ! What immense treasures of the knowledge of Christ to be acquired, to be traced out in all the parts of Scripture, to be thoroughly received, studied, deposited in the memory and heart.

3. *The perfection of our Lord's example*, also, constitutes him the great lesson of Christianity. “Learn of me,” said our Saviour when upon earth, “for I am meek and lowly of heart.” “Christ also hath once suffered for us,” says St. Peter, “leaving us an example to follow his steps : who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth : who when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not.” To imitate our Master, to learn him as a scholar learns a lesson ; to commit him to memory, as it were ; to follow his patience, his meekness, his compassion, his benevolence, his wisdom, his forbearance, his fortitude, his address under difficult circumstances, his moderation, his zeal for his Father's glory, his consideration for his adversaries, his filial piety, his devotion, his diligence and perseverance in his great undertaking—this is the lesson.

In all these respects then,—in the glory of our Lord's person, the extent of his benefits, and the purity of his example,—there is an evident excellency and pre-eminence in Christ, which gives a natural force to the brief language of the text. We not only learn of Christ, but we learn Christ ; we not only study of and about Christ, but we study Christ ; we put on Christ ;

we receive Christ. We are scholars in no other school ; we learn no other lesson ; we daily sit down to this, and only this, eager pursuit.

But there are two ways of learning every thing,—a right one and a wrong. In every branch of human science there is such a thing as a superficial, ineffectual manner of acquiring it, which answers no good purpose, and leaves men very much what they were before. And there is such a thing as a right way, which enters heartily into the spirit of the particular branch of learning, acquires it thoroughly, and applies it to its intended uses. So it is in Christianity.

This leads us therefore to consider,

*II. The wrong and inefficient way of learning the lesson of Christianity.*

The words of the text are of the nature of a caution. “Ye have not so learned Christ,” says the apostle, after having enumerated, as we have stated, some of the vices of the gentiles ; implying that there was a certain manner of teaching Christ not quite inconsistent with these vices ; that the false apostles connived at many disorders, and countenanced a variety of opinions and practices which had their source in heathenism and the corruption of the human heart.

The apostle’s enumeration may be reduced to these particulars—conceit ; ignorance ; aversion from spiritual religion ; compliance with the vices of the world ; disobedience to pastors ; malignant passions. Where these are, the lesson of Christianity is ill learned, whether in native Churches or those in established Christian countries.

Nothing can be more important in the proceedings of missionaries than to watch well the converts whom they admit to the profession of the gospel. They must beware lest, instead of learning Christ duly, their converts retain still "the vanity" and conceit of their minds ; " lifting up their souls" in secret to " the gods of the heathen, which are but vanity ;" adhering to the " vain conversation" received by tradition from their fathers, and following " lying vanities" to the forsaking of " the God of all their mercies."

They must guard their converts, also, against resting in an indistinct knowledge of the truths of the gospel, quite consistent with a " darkened understanding" and an obdurate heart. Such slip into the fold ; but have no perception of the person and grace of its great Shepherd.

In like manner, alienation from the life of God, and all approaches to the lasciviousness of their former habits must be diligently watched against. Whilst childlike docility under their proper pastors, and subjugation of the malignant passions must be enjoined. A mere theoretical learning of something about Christ, whilst all the holy effects of the gospel are wanting, is utterly inefficient.

But I turn from the native Churches, whom I am not now addressing, to the Christian, which I am.

1. For how many are there *who walk still in " the vanity of their minds ;"* who are carried away by airy speculations ; who are " wise in their own conceit ;" who receive so much of the gospel as they happen to approve, and leave out the rest. Their religion is a freak, a sudden impression, a novelty. They have no faith,

as faith ; it is opinion, vanity, conjecture, caprice. When we see persons under such fatal mistakes, we turn ourselves to you, our genuine flock, and say, “ Ye have not so learned Christ.”

2. What multitudes, again, have “ *the understanding darkened, through the ignorance that is in them.*” Some notions they have of a national creed, some prejudices, some remains of catechisms floating in their memory ; but as to any distinct and holy knowledge of the lesson of Christ, they, “ are in darkness, and walk in darkness, and know not whither they go, because that darkness hath blinded their eyes.” Tell me what such persons know of the general tenderness of the gospel proclamation,<sup>1</sup> of the sublime mystery of redemption,<sup>2</sup> of the doctrine of the atonement,<sup>3</sup> of the universal call to repentance,<sup>4</sup> of the nature of coming to Christ,<sup>5</sup> and of the Holy Ghost the Comforter of the Church.<sup>6</sup> Tell me what they know of the glorious character of the ever-blessed God,<sup>7</sup> and the reasonableness of the demand which the gospel makes upon man.<sup>8</sup>

There are thousands, alas, who need as much to have “ the eyes of their understanding enlightened,” as the Ephesians before their conversion. Ignorance is the daughter of conceit and vanity.

3. And thus as to *the divine and spiritual life*. If men have only so learned Christ, as to remain still “ alienated from the life of God ;” still guided by the same inward aversion from spiritual religion as before ; still void of those interior, spiritual affections which the

<sup>1</sup> Sermon I.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon II.

<sup>3</sup> Sermon III.

<sup>4</sup> Sermon IV.

<sup>5</sup> Sermon V.

<sup>6</sup> Sermon VI.

<sup>7</sup> Sermon VII.

<sup>8</sup> Sermon VIII.



lesson was designed to enkindle, they have persued the wrong method.

Aversion from spiritual religion; the hiding one's self from God, like Adam amidst the trees of the garden; God in his glorious redemption being the object of dread, not love; of apprehension, not delight; of aversion, not choice,—shows that all is conceit and ignorance; and that, as we might have expected, they are still “dead in trespasses and sins.”

For the life of God is the essence of all religion. In Adam before the Fall it existed as the spring of his love and obedience. In patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles and martyrs since, it has been rekindled by the knowledge of the truth and the operations of grace; in heaven it is perfected only, not changed. The dedication of man's rational powers to the love and service of God is the end and design of the gospel. Where this is wanting in any who bear the Christian name, we say to the rest, with holy jealousy, “Ye have not so learned Christ.

4. *Compliance with many of the vices of the world* is the consequence of these wrong commencements. How lamentable is it to think in how many ways vice and impurity abound amongst the young, and are encouraged and palliated by the old. Alas! it is still too true, (though, thank God, not to the same extent as in heathen society,) that many “being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness,” It is perfectly frightful to think of the corruption of youth; of the sins of impurity extenuated and excused; of the prevailing customs which are full of the strongest incentives to

those very passions which Christianity is concerned in subduing; of the books, pictures, amusements, conversation, dress, gestures, dances (aggravated by Sabbath-breaking and the false standard of morality, or rather immorality, of stage plays) which swell the current of this world's lusts. But, "ye," brethren, "have not so learned Christ."

5. Such insufficient scholars cannot of course, keep "the unity of the spirit;" they have no principles to attach them to their spiritual pastors; they are still "like children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive"—ready for every novelty, for every form of enthusiasm, for eager adherence to every new leader in politics or religion. It is from their followers, indeed, that the ranks of all the follies and pretensions of the present day have been recruited.

6. Nor is the total want of a tender, lowly spirit, of a readiness to forgive injuries, of abstinence from corrupt communication, of a fear of grieving the Holy Spirit of God, and of a dread of all that bitterness and wrath and evil speaking which peculiarly oppose that blessed Comforter, a less evident proof that all is wrong in such characters; that they "know nothing yet as they ought to know."

III. But let us turn to the consideration of what is *the only right manner of learning Christ*.

This occupies just the opposite position in every one of the steps which we have noticed. In opposition to conceit of mind, it is marked by humility and sim-

plicity; instead of ignorance, by divine knowledge; instead of aversion of heart from spiritual things, by a new principle of life; in place of a sinful compliance with the world, by habits of universal holiness; of disobedience to pastors, by tender submission; and of malignant passions, by meekness and charity.

1. No, beloved brethren, "ye have not so learned Christ," as to walk still in conceit and the vanity of your minds; "if so be that ye have heard him and been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus," that is, if you have any thing of the humility and simplicity of a disciple in the Christian school. For you will then have heard Christ himself, as it were, by the hands of his faithful pastors; and been taught by his own mouth, as "the truth is in Jesus," simply and without admixture of human error. There is something very touching in this description of the simplicity of the right method of learning Christ. We place ourselves directly at his feet, so to speak; we sit like Mary in childlike humility and teachableness, to hear his very words; we welcome instruction as he is pleased to convey it to our minds; we drink in "the truth as it is in Jesus," as water at the fountain-head, to our souls' refreshment. Thus the vanity and conceit of the natural mind begin to be cured, the speculations of a vagrant fancy to be repressed, and the learner is taught and disciplined in his lesson aright.

2. The consequence of this good beginning is, that, instead of ignorance remaining in the darkened understanding, divine knowledge penetrates, and illuminates the soul. As he learns, he is "renewed in the spirit of his mind" thereby; "renewed in knowledge

after the image of Him that created him." The understanding is enlightened ; the " spirit of the mind," or intellect, is touched by a new and heavenly hand. " God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness shines, into his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Thus all things in practical religion are seen aright. What he learns of Christ, is not only received with simplicity as from the very mouth of Jesus, but is applied by an enlightened understanding to its proper uses ; which is altogether a different thing from having Christianity forced upon a mind still filled with conceit and ignorance.

3. The true method proceeds. Instead of the inward alienation from spiritual religion continuing, the humble scholar " puts on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." A delight and acquiescence in God, springing from a participation of the divine truth and purity, accompanies his learning Christ. He " puts on the new man" in him, as the convert of old put on new and white raiment at the solemnity of his baptism ; that is, the beginning of that heavenly character, bias, and just determination of the will with which Adam was first created. This is the life of God ; and it begins and goes on with every part of the lesson. What humility receives and divine knowledge teaches to apply, the " new man" loves acquiesces in, makes his delight, his joy, his end. Thus truth produces holiness ; a new principle of life is implanted ; and aversion from spiritual things is succeeded by the internal love of God, and of man for God's sake.

4. Habits of practical holiness follow, instead of that

sinful compliance with the world which the mere external Christian indulges. The true scholar has "put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." The term, the "old man," is of course opposed here to the "new man" just referred to. By the one is meant the general sinful bias of nature with its effects, which is derived from fallen Adam ; by the other, all that holy and new tendency of nature with its habits and acts, which is derived from Christ, the second Adam. This old nature is then daily put off, rejected, laid aside, as the convert in the primitive Church cast off his former garments at his baptism, when he was attired, as we just observed, in new and white raiment. He who learns Christ aright, learns to imitate his holy life ; he "keeps his garments lest they should be defiled." He attends, indeed, to the duties and courtesies of society. But he is ever fearful of imbibing the spirit, or countenancing "the corruption, which is in the world through lust." Instead of adding voluntary worldly associations to his real duties, he subtracts them ; instead of courting doubtful engagements, he shuns them ; instead of rushing near to temptations, he trembles at their approach ; instead of occupying more time than absolutely needful in worldly civilities, he endeavours to occupy less ; instead of filling up the intervals of affairs with worldly pleasures, he fills them up with spiritual. He "walks circumspectly ;" "redeems," or buys up, every moment of "the time ;" seeks retirement for prayer and meditation ; "abstains from every appearance of evil ;" "walks humbly with his God ;" and is thus gradually "sanctified wholly, body, soul, and spirit."

5. Unity in the Church is easily preserved by this lowly and sincere learner. Subjection to pastors and teachers, according to the grace of Him “ who ascended up on high and gave gifts to men,” is cheerfully paid : “ winds of doctrine” toss him not about, because he “ grows up into Christ in all things which is the head,” and is “ compacted and joined together in him by that which every joint supplieth.”

6. He “ puts away,” from the same divine teaching, “ lying ;” lets “ not the sun go down upon his wrath ;” “ works with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth ;” lets nothing proceed from his mouth but what “ may minister grace unto the hearers ;” “ grieves not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby he is sealed to the day of redemption,” by “ bitterness, or wrath, or anger, or clamour, or evil-speaking, or malice ;” but he is “ kind to all around, tender-hearted, forgiving others, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven him.”

*What a beneficial tendency, then, must a school like Christianity have on the happiness and peace of mankind—where the false method of acquiring its lesson is thus repudiated, and the benevolent, lowly, forgiving spirit of the Master himself is incorporated with every element of it. You observe how all the Christian mysteries have, not only a bearing upon Christian benevolence, but directly produce it ; and if they do not produce it, can never have been learned at all.*

You notice, also, how immediately the innocence and holiness of our Lord’s personal character goes to form the upright and tender-hearted disciple ; just as the

fierce and impure life of Mahomet is infused into those who follow his imposture, or the immoralities of the Hindoo deities are reproduced in their worshippers.

*But let not the young and anxious scholar be discouraged* at the picture I have drawn of the false and true method of learning Christ. You fear you are not right. You lament your dulness. You seem to yourself to have made but small advances. Be not discouraged, however ; pursue the inquiry. Your progress must be gradual. A lesson like Christianity, is not learned all at once ; which, though brief in words, is new, strange, difficult to our corrupt nature.

Keep your eye on the main point in Revelation. Learn Christ—learn every thing else in the Bible ; but chiefly, primarily, prominently learn Christ. Never will you fully master this one subject ; the length and breadth and depth and height of his love so far surpass knowledge. But advance more and more.

Unite all the main parts of the comprehensive lesson as you proceed. What you do learn, learn well. Let every thing be proportionate. The lesson is wide as the Bible itself. Pray most earnestly for God's Holy Spirit, the great primary Teacher of the Church. Soon shall you bless God with holy joy for having taught you all the saving "truth as it is in Jesus," and for having opened before you a boundless scene of further acquisition.

*Let the captious or reluctant scholar be cautioned.* You are full of difficulties on the subject of Christianity. You object to this topic and to the other. You know

not that your embarrassments arise from learning Christ in the wrong method. "The vanity of the mind" is not subdued ; the darkness remains on your understanding. The heart is alienated. The world carries you down its stream. You despise the instructions of ministers ; you live in quarrelsomeness, malice, and envy.

What can you expect then ? You are, of course, "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," though you are "ever learning ;" because, "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

Enter then on a new course. Submit to Christ's discipline. What is there so worthy of humble, diligent study as this mighty lesson ? You learn every thing, except the very thing which most concerns an immortal creature. You learn what may gratify a petty curiosity as to art, science, history, philosophy, jurisprudence ; and you neglect that art, that science, that history, that divine philosophy which "angels desire to look into."

You learn things which are to benefit only the body ; and are ignorant of that which is to save the soul. You learn that which may never succeed in its application and supposed uses ; and you pass by that knowledge which is sure in the acquisition, and infinite in the benefit.

Seek, then, "the Lord while he may be found." Now he exhibits himself to you as your lesson, and says, "Learn of me." Hereafter he will come in his glory and say, Appear before me ; approach my tribunal ; awake to eternity ! Hereafter he will assume his throne of judgment. Hereafter he will solemnly examine whether you have improved or not your advantages for



knowing him as a Saviour. Then it will be too late to learn any thing further, except the misery which follows disobedience. It will then be the time, not of learning, but of suffering; not of acquiring, but of enduring. Let us all, then, unite now in one resolution, to begin, if we have not yet done so, to learn Christ; and to learn him more and more, and in the only true and saving manner, if we have already entered on the divine study.

## S E R M O N X.

ISAIAH lvii. 15.

For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

IN the application of Christianity to the human heart, nothing receives so effectually all the directions of holy Scripture, as a duly humbled mind. To the contrite all is easy; to the obstinate and proud all is difficulty. A trembling apprehension of entertaining false conceptions of the divine character,<sup>1</sup> is not inconsistent with consolation and joy in the breast of the lowly. Nay, the very greatness of God, his awful distance from us, his infinite glories become, as we see in the text, the source of comfort, when the heart is once penitent and broken before him.

Let us, then, consider this subject, The glory and majesty of God the source of comfort to the contrite in heart. It will naturally divide itself into three parts; The greatness of God; The correspondent temper which becomes man; The consolations flowing in this way from the very majesty of the divine character.

<sup>1</sup> Sermon vii.

I. The prophet first *gives a magnificent description of the greatness of God*: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place." This glory of God consists, then, in his essential Majesty; his Eternity; his infinite rectitude; his exalted place of peculiar abode.

1. His glory appears in his essential Majesty. He is "the high and lofty One"—the exalted One; the one only glorious Being who is on high; far above out of human view and conception; the one mighty Author, Creator, Preserver, and Lord of all; to whom none other is like; with whom there are no participators nor partners; who is not merely not one amongst the pretended deified men or heroes, the objects of idolatrous worship, but the excellency of whose essential being and perfections raises him far above all comparison with any created beings, whether they be angels or archangels, or principalities or powers. "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I am God, and there is none beside me." "Now will I rise," saith the Lord, "now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself." "I saw the Lord," said the prophet, "sitting on his throne, high and lifted up." "Now stand up and bless the Lord your God, for ever and ever," said Nehemiah, "and blessed be thy glorious Name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise." God has thus a sovereign dominion over all, an incontestable right to all, and an exalted power and glory which raises him above all. Man creeps upon this lower earth; man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm. His vain efforts to swell and lift up himself, are the

tumors of pride. God only is great. All is little, all is low, all is mean, compared with the one only God.

2. But his greatness appears, further, in the immutability of his existence. He "inhabiteth eternity." What a sublime expression! It occurs here only. Not only is God self-existent, high, lifted up, but he is immortal, eternal, unchangeable. And all this in such a degree, that "He only hath immortality;" he only inhabits and dwells in eternity, possessing it as his abode. "A thousand years in his sight are but as yesterday when it is passed." "From everlasting to everlasting he is God." Man, indeed, is as "the grass; as the flower of the field, so he flourisheth;" but the Lord is "the same, and his years do not fail." This eternity God inhabits, as it were; he embraces and comprehends it; it is so attached and connected with his nature and kingdom, that it cannot be separated even in thought. There is with him "neither beginning of days, nor end of life." He "hath life in himself;" he is both immortal and immutable. We must shortly be removed into eternity; but he has always dwelt in it and possessed it; he has it constantly; he has it in himself, and cannot be dispossessed of it. "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even his eternal power and Godhead."

3. But this glory appears, again, in the infinite Rectitude of his Nature; "whose name is Holy." The exalted and immutable character of the most High God are important truths indeed; but the great question for an accountable being like man, is, What are

the moral attributes of the Almighty? How is man to think of Him as respects wisdom, righteousness, truth? What is the rule of duty, the way of acceptance, the hope of pardon and salvation? “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts,” the unceasing song of the seraphs before the throne—is the reply. “Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders,” the hymn of Moses—is the reply. “Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy,” the words of the Almighty himself—is the reply. “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord,” the words of the apostle—is the reply. “That God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus: for he hath made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him,” the language of the same apostle—is the reply.

This is the fundamental doctrine of all revelation; the one living and true God is as glorious in holiness, as he is in power and eternity. He is as much “the high and lofty One” by the purity and excellency of his moral attributes, as he is by the majesty and immutability of his natural perfections. That union and harmony of every species of moral goodness in its highest measure, or rather beyond measure, which we understand by the holiness of God, forms his distinguishing glory. All that desire to be acquainted with him, must know him to be most holy, in creation, in providence, in redemption, in grace, in the final judgment of the world, in the adjudication of man to heaven and hell.

4. All these moral and natural excellencies are further illustrated by the exalted place of abode, where he

more immediately manifests his presence ; “ I dwell in the high and holy place ;” in the heaven of heavens, surrounded by angels and archangels, and all “ the Church and assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect.” There doth our God dwell, exalted ; placed on high ; worshipped, obeyed, and adored by all holy and blessed beings that “ see his face, that do his commandment, hearkening to the voice of his word.” There he “ dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man” (no one clothed with mortality) “ hath seen nor can see : to whom be glory for ever and ever.” Amen.

II. *What, then, must be the correspondent temper of mind which becomes such a creature as man, before this great God?* This is our second point. We are not yet arrived at consolation. Something must intervene. Man must be brought down to his proper place. Till this is done, he compels, as it were, the Almighty to set himself in array against him.

Now, whether we consider man as a creature, or as a transgressor, or as under divine rebukes, lowliness on every account becomes him.

1. For as a frail, mortal, feeble creature, who is “ crushed before the moth,” humility is the only suitable temper for man before the great and glorious God. Even angels and archangels veil their faces with their wings in his presence. The saints who are in the glories of heaven itself “ fall down before the throne, and cast their crowns at the Almighty’s feet. Adam in his original innocence must ever have been sensible of his infinite distance from his Creator : of his dependance

on him, his weakness, his obligations. And if men knew their relative position now, they would acknowledge that between him "who inhabiteth eternity," and "a shadow that passes by," there are no measures of comparison; that before him who "dwells in the high and holy place," man, who says to "corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and sister," should prostrate his understanding, as well as his passions and appetites.

Nothing can be so arrogant and presumptuous as the pride of intellect which is now so commonly admired. Even natural religion implies the dependance, ignorance, frailty of man. All declamations against religion generally; all profane and light language on the doctrines of Christianity; satire upon the persons or employment of the servants of God; all contempt for piety; all indifference to Christianity as a revelation from heaven; all abstract objections to express matters of inspired truth; all popular declamations against any mysterious parts of Christian truth, are all contrary to the obligations of natural, as well as revealed, religion. To trifle with what appertains to "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," brands the deist with impiety, as well as inconsistency.

2. But it is *as transgressors* that we are chiefly to lie abased in the awful presence of the most High. Something more than humility becomes man as an offender against his rightful sovereign. Humility is a just estimate of ourselves. Contrition is more; it is penitence for sin, brokenness of heart for having offended God. The first is always man's duty as a creature; the second, as a sinner.

The primary idea of contrition is derived from any thing which is crushed under foot, trodden down, bruised, totally broken and destroyed, and ground into powder, as it were. In this sense it is used by the prophet,<sup>1</sup> “ But I will put the cup into the hand of them that afflict thee, which have said to thy soul, bow down that we may go over ; and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the dust to them that went over.”

When this primary idea is transferred to the mind, it is often used to express any excessive grief, dejection, or sorrow. And thus we familiarly speak of this and that person dying of a broken heart.

But if it be in a religious sense that the transferred word is employed, it imports poverty and grief of spirit on account of sin, as committed against the great God. It is the union of the two beatitudes of our Lord. “ Blessed are the poor in spirit ;” and “ Blessed are they that mourn.” Contrition thus stands opposed to hardness and stoutness of heart generally ; and, except as the consolations of grace are vouchsafed, to that “ reviving of the spirit” of which the latter part of our text speaks.

King Josiah was an instance of this contrite heart : “ Because thy heart was tender, and thou humblest thyself before me, when thou heardest all the words written in this book.” And Manasseh, when he “ humbled himself greatly before the Lord God of his fathers, and sought the Lord his God.” And the publican, who “ stood afar off, and durst not lift up so much as

<sup>1</sup> In his 53d chapter.



his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

This contrition for sin springs from a view of the corruption and rebellion of our nature against God, brought home to the conscience and heart by the Holy Ghost ; and producing a sense of the guilt, folly, apostasy, treachery of man before the " high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy." Conviction of sin original and actual, is the source of all grief, and contrition on account of it. Shame, regret, confusion of face follow. The guilt of neglecting, forgetting, provoking, insulting the high and only Potentate ; the demerit of a life of folly, perverseness, sensuality, pride, worldliness, formality, death, descend as an overhanging mountain upon the soul, and grind it in the dust.

Two things especially contribute to real contrition. The one, a sense of God's gracious, benignant character ; his forbearance and long-suffering with man—his name and very nature in every way consistent with his moral attributes, being love ; his law also being all goodness, holiness, and truth ; his provision of mercy in his only-begotten Son, rich and abundant. Nothing sets man's frightful ingratitude in so odious and prominent a light, as the unspeakable goodness of the great God. So long as man falsely conceives of him as a hard master, he feels, he can feel, no contrition ; but when he discerns that God is, and ever has been, infinitely good, and to him also, his heart bursts with ingenuous grief and self-abhorrence.

The other, is the inscrutable wickedness and deceitfulness of his own heart, which, like the prophet Ezekiel's " chamber of imagery," discloses more and more

of its interior "abominations," as it is more closely examined. These two things break the heart, silence objections, convince us of the helpless state in which we are as sinners, show us that we can neither make an atonement for past sins of ourselves, nor perform acceptable obedience for the future.

Accordingly, one principal object of divine teaching and grace under the gospel, is this very contrition of soul: "I will take away," said the Almighty, "the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." "I will pour out on the house of David the spirit of grace and supplication, and they shall look unto him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; and they shall be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done."

3. The penitent is now prepared for the further measures of humiliation which *God's rebukes and chastisements require*. This was the case with the Church when the prophet addresses it in the text. God had been wrath with the people for their scoffs and profaneness, their covetousness, and, generally, their "going on frowardly in the way of their hearts." For these provocations the Lord had smitten them; and in the words before us, he points to that spirit of contrition which alone corresponds with their position as creatures, as sinners, and as a people under consequent calamities. Thus Abraham and Jacob, when their own particular sins had brought on them divine retributions, would

sink yet lower in dust and ashes before the most Highest. Their contrition for sin would be embittered and deepened by the rebukes of their God. So the holy Psalmist, when God made him to "possess the iniquities" he had committed with respect to Bathsheba, and the sword entered his house, and his son Absalom rose in rebellion, and he was banished from his throne, and from the ordinances of God, pours out the poignant voice of grief and shame, and says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

The keenest reproach to any Church is, when the Lord is compelled to say, "The people turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts." A proud, unhumiliated, unmortified heart murmurs under rebukes, like the children of Israel in the wilderness; or rejects warnings, like the men in the days of Noah and of Lot; or dares God to his face, like Pharaoh.

But the contrite and humble in spirit receives the divine rebukes, justifies God in his righteous retributions, and condemns himself. He says, with the prophet, "What I know not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more;" and with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." And with David, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled." "Thy rebukes have broken my heart, I am full of heaviness." "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever, hath his

promise failed for ever more ? Hath God forgotten to be gracious ? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies ?”

No, my dejected and disconsolate hearer, God’s mercies are not gone for ever ; all this contrition and darkness, when they have wrought their due work in you, will yield to the brightest beams of comfort.

For this leads us to consider,

III. *The consolation flowing in this way from the very majesty of the divine character.* “ I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” The allusion is to the temple of old, where God was pleased to dwell, and of which the Jews, even after they had relapsed into idolatry, boasted with extraordinary confidence. The Lord therefore thus rebukes their pride, and declares the nature of the spiritual temple where he will abide under the universal dispensation of Messiah : “ Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool ; where is the house that ye build unto me, and where is the place of my rest ? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord ; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.”

Accordingly, the great God dwells with the humble ; he does this on purpose to console them ; and he causes this consolation to flow from the view of his greatness.

1. “ If any man love me,” said our gracious Saviour, when upon earth, “ he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and

make our abode with him." Thus saith the Lord, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

These passages sufficiently explain the figurative expression before us; God will take up his especial abode, and manifest his presence, in the heart of the humble and contrite. Such a heart is prepared to entertain the divine guest; it is emptied of pride and self; it has renounced its false confidence and conceit; it has given up its lusts and pleasures; it has ceased to trust in its own merits, its own righteousness, its own intellectual might; it acknowledges the claims of the Almighty on the creature's obedience; it confesses its transgressions and inward depravity; it justifies God in his chastisements; it lies trodden under foot, reduced to the very dust, as it were, and "makes itself as the ground for the Almighty to pass over."

God, therefore, instead of despising the prayer of the poor destitute, enters into his trembling heart, chooses it as his peculiar abode, makes it his temple, manifests himself as the God of grace, the God of pardon, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, reconciled through the sacrifice of his mysterious Cross, and vouchsafing the sanctifying influence of his Holy Spirit. The heart being empty, contrite, abased before him, he enters as the King of glory, ascends the vacant throne, and fills the amplest desires of the soul.

2. Nor doth he enter in vain: *he comes with the design of "reviving the spirit of the humble, and reviving the heart of the contrite ones."*

The image is drawn from the revival of the face of Nature, by refreshing rain after a long drought; or from the raising to new life a dejected and desponding mind, by joyful and unexpected tidings. Thus where God comes to dwell, he consoles. Whilst God is absent, joy is absent. And although penitence and contrition may have done their work, yet comfort is still wanting, so long as the inhabitation of God by his Spirit is wanting. The soul drags on heavily. The daily increasing perception of innate corruption weighs down the heart. Conscience accuses; the Law condemns. The joy of pardon sometimes springs up, but it fades again. The hope of being a sincere penitent cheers at times; but it is difficult for the soul to discern, amidst its tears and dejection, the marks of repentance unto life. Then afflictions add to the general woe. God seems armed against the soul. "He looks to the earth, and behold trouble, darkness, dimness of anguish; and he is driven to darkness."

At length, however, it pleases God to "revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." He sheds light amidst the gloom, and "lifts up the light of his countenance" upon him. The prophet doubles the expression, to denote the certainty and magnitude of the blessing. "The word," says Vitranga, "embraces all the work which the Holy Ghost performs in the dispensations of grace, in renewing and restoring the mind, exciting, nourishing, cheering, and causing it to rejoice in the soft comfort of remission of sins, and a sense of God's favour and presence with it."

The exhausted, dying traveller going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and falling amongst thieves, strip-

ped, wounded, and left for dead, was not more truly revived by the wine and oil of the good Samaritan, than the spirit of the contrite ones is revived by the presence and indwelling of the Saviour in the heart.

And when in the holy mysteries of our eucharistic sacrament the very seal of pardon and peace is affixed to the promise, then indeed "we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood ; we dwell in Christ and Christ in us ; we are one with Christ and Christ with us ;" we are then " crucified with Christ ; nevertheless we live, yet not we, but Christ liveth in us."

And if, in addition to this, the Lord, as in the case before us in the prophet, removes our external afflictions, and says to us, "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wrath ;" "I have seen his ways and will heal him ; I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners ;" then is the soul fully revived ; then doth it receive "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

3. The way in which *all this consolation flows from the view of the divine greatness*, is too direct a part of our subject to be slightly passed over.

For the whole scope of the text is directed to this one point ; and almost all the similar descriptions of the majesty of the Almighty, are given in connection with his condescension to man ; with his "humbling himself to behold the things done in heaven and in earth ; his receiving man's adorations ; his listening to his prayers ; his rescuing him from danger ; his despatching his "angels as ministering spirits to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation."

Nor are the reasons difficult to discover. Consolation flowing from God's goodness, mercy, compassion, love, is great indeed ; but not so overwhelming, as when it is described as springing from his greatness, and holiness, and self-existence.

For the sense of favour is thus enhanced. The condescension is more remarkable. The stooping, as it were, is from a greater height. Every trait of the divine, incomprehensible, immutable nature, and its infinite perfections, more illustrates that favour and grace which could reach down so far as to such feeble worms of the earth as we are.

Then the surprise and unexpectedness is greater. Why is the "high and lofty One, inhabiting eternity, whose name is Holy," first set before us in such magnificence, but to magnify the subsequent condescension by its suddenness ? The beginning of the text seems to prepare for just a contrary conclusion. What might not the contrite ones have dreaded from such an introduction ? Surely, some fearful sentence will come next ! No : "hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," the majesty of the blessed and only Potentate proclaims the breast of the humble to be his temple ; fixes this as the law of the gospel, this as the principle of the last dispensation ; this as the manner in which he resisteth indeed "the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

The value of redemption, again, is elevated by the majesty and holiness of the exalted and lofty One, who dwells in the contrite heart. For it is these very perfections of the moral Governor of the world which required such a sacrifice as the death of his only-begotten



**Son.** If you sink God's holiness, sovereignty, eternity, law, you sink the ransom-price of that redemption by which this Almighty ruler of all was exhibited in the Cross as "a just God and a Saviour."

The sense of security and deliverance, also, is greater; for if God, this God be for us, who can be against us? If this exalted and glorious Being undertakes to give us a reviving; to pardon, rescue, comfort, and save, who can destroy? Who enter the pavilion in which he hides us? Who penetrate the shadow of his wings? All the greatness of God, which was before against us, is now for, and with, and around us. Our petty, feeble nature is no ground of fear, if he, who is "the Rock of ages" covers us, as it were, in a cleft of it with his own Almighty hand.

Lastly, the final end of man seems more distinctly taken into account and provided for. For we were made to enjoy this great God. We were endowed with all but angelic powers, that we might know, adore, possess, find our felicity in this glorious Creator. The more, therefore, his natural and moral perfections are displayed in connection with his inhabitation in the contrite heart, the more distinctly doth man seem to approach his final end, his ultimate repose, the purport of his reasonable and moral nature. Mercy and compassion are thus less directly illustrative of the incomprehensible fulness of the heavenly bliss, than this sublime description of the greatness and glory of Him, whose presence constitutes heaven; who is himself the self-existent and beatific source of felicity; and who, with the Son and the Spirit, will for ever dwell and walk in his redeemed and glorified people.

*But where, then, will “the ungodly and the sinner appear,” in the last fearful day?* Let such tremble at the thought of standing in judgment before this Holy Lord God. If God be so glorious; if his being, and perfections, and government, and revelation of redemption in Christ Jesus, be not a speculative, but a grand, practical, all-pervading truth; then what will become of those, who, like Pharaoh, refuse to humble themselves before Him? What will become of the proud, the stout-hearted, the self-righteous, the careless, the superstitious, the intellectual sophists, “the vain disputers of this world?”

God will ere long “lift up himself;” God will ere long close the time of long-suffering; God will ere long vindicate his moral government, and justify his ways before an assembled universe. Then will none but the humble be exalted; then will none but the contrite ones be revived; then will none but the meek believers in a crucified Saviour be acknowledged as the heirs of that kingdom which he hath prepared for them that fear him.

Submit yourselves, therefore, ere it be too late, to this great God. Implore his Holy Spirit to enable you to do so. Approach him in Christ Jesus. Sink, that you may hereafter rise. Be abased, that you may be exalted. Be humble and contrite now, that you may be acknowledged, and revived, and placed in the enjoyment of eternal life, at the last day.

## S E R M O N XI.

## 2 CORINTHIANS xii. 9.

Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

THE Christian paradox is here announced—strength derived from weakness. For one of the new principles brought into operation by our divine religion is, that man's moral power lies in the knowledge of his own feebleness, and in his casting himself by faith on the might and grace of God in Jesus Christ.

This is the remarkable topic which the apostle is treating in the passage of which the text is a part.

He had received some extraordinary proofs of the divine favour; he had been “caught up into paradise;” “whether in the body or out of the body, he could not tell;” and had heard unutterable mysteries. Lest however he should be “exalted by the abundance of the revelations,” there was sent unto him, what he terms, “a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him.

For the removal of this affliction he repeatedly besought the Lord; but upon receiving the assurance that the grace of Christ would be sufficient and adequate for his sustentation under the discipline; and that the strength of his Saviour would be the more dis-

played in the support thus administered, he changes his view of the case, and breaks out in the holy resolution of the text, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "Therefore," continues he, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake;" and then he concludes his triumph by affirming in yet briefer terms the paradox which I have selected as our present subject; "for when I am weak, then am I strong."

An extraordinary conclusion, surely; and to which he could have only arrived by means of a painful discipline, in the first place; and then of unlooked for grace vouchsafed under it and in the midst of it. To these I am now to call your attention. For the paradox must be analysed; its two several parts must be separately considered, as well as the process by which the conviction of the first, and the experience of the second, were produced.

We have therefore to notice, first, The apostle's weakness; then, The salutary conviction of it gradually produced; and, lastly, The strength ultimately flowing from both.

May God the Holy Spirit so be pleased to "strengthen us all with might in the inner man," that we may discern and feel for ourselves the truth and consolation of this apparently inexplicable statement!

I. *The apostle's weakness included all those various classes of difficulties* from without, and of interior trials from within, with which he was chastened by Almighty God.

1. He had, *as a Christian*, to meet the ordinary afflictions and sorrows which attend our mortal conflict with the world, Satan, and sin. He was susceptible of pain as well as others ; he felt disappointment ; he was grieved at the removal of friends ; he was conscious of injury from reproach, contumely, ingratitude ; he felt the cruelty of imprisonment without cause ; he wept over the miseries of the world, the perverseness of the Jewish prejudices, and the pride of wisdom in the Greeks ; he was aware of his own many infirmities of judgment and purpose in the discharge of his conflicting duties. He was in all these senses weak, in common with other servants of God, especially in days of persecution.

2. But the expression before us rather refers to *the peculiar trials* which attended his apostleship. For he was "in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft : " and " besides those things which were without, that which came upon him daily, the care of all the Churches." "For who was weak, and he was not weak ; who was offended, and he burned not ?"

The disorders also and contentions which arose amongst the Corinthian and other converts, filled him with additional grief. The false teachers who endeavoured to sap his authority, who preached Christ even of envy and strife, " supposing to add afflictions to his bonds ; " who divided into parties the body of the faithful, and ranked themselves, some " as of Paul, and some of Apollos, and some of Cephas, and some of Christ ; " must have been a source of distressing weakness and anxiety.

3. But *some one especial affliction* was more oppressive than the rest. "There was given me," he says, "a thorn in the flesh"—some painful visitation resembling in its effects a goad or thorn inserted in the flesh, and there festering and irritating the whole body; not mortal in itself, but disqualifying for duty, impeding, weakening, obstructing; some sorrow that pursued him every where, exhausting his strength, and drinking up his animal spirits; and which, like a deeply seated thorn rankling in his frame, he could in no wise extract. This was sent at a moment when he had been most favoured by the Almighty; when he had been elevated with the visions of Paradise, and would have appeared least likely to expect such an event.

What particular infliction it was, we are not told. The Bible never administers to mere curiosity. Had the minute character of it been detailed, its application in subsequent ages would have been less easy; whereas now, being left in general terms, it is equally suited for consolation under all possible varieties of trial, to all persons, in all countries, and in every period of time.

It is enough for us to know, that, as Jacob at the moment of most exalted favour at Peniel, was reminded of his weakness by the shrinking sinew of his thigh, and went away halting before men, to the observation of all who saw him, when he had just prevailed as a prince with God; so St. Paul carried down with him from the heights of heaven, some humiliating memorial of infirmity, like a stake or goad inserted into his flesh.

Or that as the Israelites when surrounded by the inhabitants of the land, so St. Paul when he descended

from the scenes of unutterable glory, found some persons or things about him to be "as pricks in his eyes and thorns in his side," which vexed and impeded him in the discharge of his most solemn duties.

We may judge of the grievous irritation here intended, by the degree of pain which the most ordinary thorn piercing the foot in our path, occasions. This is to lower indeed the image; for the expression before us imports a large goad or stake, inserted and driven into the most susceptible part of the frame, not slightly taken up by the foot only. But to illustrate the case even by this commonest of all occurrences, we perfectly know that with such an impediment, we proceed on our way, at first, more slowly and with some pain; afterwards with weakness, dejection, and weariness; then, with the body and mind exhausted; till, disqualifying inflammation lastly succeeds.

4. All this was, moreover, *aggravated by Satan, the great spiritual adversary*: the apostle says, it was "a messenger of Satan to buffet him." It was not merely a simple affliction, however peculiar, but with Satan also assailing him like Job. His "fiery darts" were directed against him, as a mark. He came in as an opponent, mixed himself with the fray, and "buffeted" the fainting combatant. Satan's designs are malignant. He knows nothing of the gracious purposes of God towards his servants. The "thorn," so far as he was concerned, was dipped in mortal poison;<sup>1</sup> nor had he any thing less at heart than the ultimate benefit of the apostle, and the display of the power of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Calv : in loc.

Such was the case of St. Paul : and such in all ages has been the case of Christians generally, and in particular of the ministers of religion in times of persecution or other seasons of remarkable difficulty. They feel dejecting weakness, trial, opposition. In their public duties more especially, in which the good of their fellow creatures and the glory of Christ are concerned, opponents rise up as against the apostle. Their motives are misrepresented, their honest efforts resisted, their warmest supporters thwarted, neutralized, turned against them. Losses of friends, ingratitude, cowardice in those who should have aided, and who promised to have aided them, make them painfully feel the weakness of their mortal state.

Perhaps some peculiarly irritating affliction, like "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan," is sent to "buffet" them at seasons of unusual success in other respects, and to expose them to the gaze and contempt of the observant and despiteful world.

Their "soul is brought low even to the dust." They say, "They are forsaken and forgotten of the Lord;" "all they that go by spoil them; they are become a reproach to their neighbours;" they fear that "God's mercy is clean gone for ever, and that his promise has failed for ever more.

See Job in his destitution and sickness. Mark Jacob going down, as he conceived, to his grave in sorrow. Behold Joseph in prison, "the iron entering into his soul;" Hannah "provoked sore by her adversary for to make her to fret;" David "hunted as a partridge on the mountains" by those who had "gone up with him to the house of God."



Here, then, I may leave the first part of the paradox. I have fairly opened to you the infirmities which form this branch of it. Would any before me desire me to include their own case more expressly; would they wish me to state their aggravated sufferings in detail? They probably would. Every sufferer thinks his own case peculiar. Then take the text, each one of you, and fill up the blank with your own name and circumstances. I give you full license. Only insist not on inscribing your particular story in the sacred text; because that would unfit it for the use of the millions and millions in all ages who have equally with you applied it to themselves. But for the time make it your own. Say, such and such and such a trial is to me a "thorn in the flesh," the "messenger of Satan," which "buffets me" as a powerful and malicious combatant. You are now then prepared to follow me in considering,

II. *The salutary conviction which the Apostle's weakness gradually produced in his mind.* For we are not yet arrived at the other branch of the paradox. There is no appearance as yet of strength; and least of all, of strength arising from weakness. We see nothing at present but absolute suffering, the malignant darts of Satan, the body emaciated by anguish, duties and efforts impeded. We must consider, then, the process by which the extraordinary result was brought about. We must view the apostle learning under the heavenly discipline those lessons which prepared him, as they will us, for receiving the aid and grace of Christ.

1. The goading thorn, then, was a means of leading him to the true source of strength, *by checking secret*

*exultation.* St. Paul had been favoured, as I have stated, with peculiar manifestations of the heavenly world; and a danger hence arose, through the corruption of nature, of his being “exalted above measure.” The Almighty Physician saw the disease before St. Paul himself did, and began laying in materials for its cure in a way he little expected. Any blessings however slight, whether temporal or spiritual, have a tendency to engender pride in such a creature as fallen man. What could St. Paul, it may be said, see in the third heavens to produce self-applause? Was there danger of pride in heaven? Does not the nearer view of God generate humility? Undoubtedly. But the peril is not from the objects themselves, but from the heart which contemplates them. Any distinction, any power, any success, any circumstance which brings us before others, any measure of knowledge or influence, is dangerous in the extreme. It is a spark falling on the most inflammable materials. The propensity is so strong, that the best Christians need “a thorn in the flesh” to check the evil.

False religion, indeed, is habitually marked by pride, and is not altered materially by elevation; it is the element in which it moves. True religion flourishes only in humility; and therefore pride, like an imposthume, is opened by the salutary care of the good Physician, whatever pain it occasions.

If any man could be considered exempt from this peril, it was the apostle. He was profoundly humble; he accounted himself “the chief of sinners.” The “abundant revelations,” to which the text refers, had been kept concealed by him for “fourteen years;” they are then described as conferred on a certain person not

named ; and this, only on occasion of the boastings of the false teachers, and when forced from him by the necessities of the Churches ; and at last they are stated with apologies, with confusion, as by one who was “ become a fool in glorying.” Nevertheless, St. Paul was in danger ; in such danger, that “ a messenger of Satan” is sent, as to Job of old, to “ buffet” him.

And yet how frequently do young Christians now-a-days rush into the greatest perils without thought ! They love to be talked of ; they boast of every thing God vouchsafes them ; they hurry to relate their experiences ; they delight in crowds and display—little thinking how soon vanity and self-confidence are generated in the human heart.

2. The apostle further was led by the heavenly discipline to *more fervent prayer*. “ For this cause,” he informs us, “ I besought the Lord thrice,” (frequently) “ that it might depart from me.” But had not St. Paul been a man of fervent prayer before ? Are not his epistles full of prayers, affectionate, earnest prayers for all the Churches ? Yes. But he had not prayed with that feeling of personal urgency, with that degree of holy importunity, with that sacred wrestling with God, with that interior prostration of soul which this goading thorn excited. Till the emergency was created he could not pray as one in that emergency.

You will observe here, that we are permitted to intercede with God against the afflictions we suffer. So Abraham did ; so Jacob ; so Moses ; so our blessed Lord himself. Afflictions could never work their proper effect in us, if we were not allowed to feel them, and pray for their removal ; and when answers to our suit

appear to be suspended, we are encouraged to persevere in our supplications. We are then to "continue in prayer," like the Syrophœnician mother in the gospel; to "ask, to seek, to knock;" and even to use holy "violence;" for we know not when God may see us in a state of mind to receive deliverance; we know not when the event may be really best for us. Prayer itself is a holy exercise, a gift of grace, worth any affliction. And delays in God's replies to us are peculiarly calculated to subdue pride of heart. We never pray as we should, till we are in "the depths," as the Psalmist speaks. A thorough conviction of the necessity of fervent, unremitted prayer is one part of the process we are under when "the thorn" is inserted in our flesh.

3. A third is, *the deeply seated perception of our need of grace*. St. Paul was to be taught, more than he had even before been, that the grace of God could, and would suffice him in circumstances the most new, painful, and exhausting; and that nothing else would. He was to learn thoroughly his weakness, that he might be prepared to seek for strength out of himself. "My grace is sufficient for thee," was the Saviour's reply to his importunate prayers, "for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Here is the lesson. Here is the process carried on by the Divine discipline. Here is the purification of the precious metal which is going on in the furnace. The conviction of the need of more grace, as well as of the necessity of prayer, and the peril of self-exultation, is often a greater blessing to us than the removal of an affliction. Had "the thorn" been extracted at once from the apostle, the sense of the all-sufficiency of grace would not have been so vivid

and permanent, as when it continued long in all its irritation, and yet compensating succour was thrown in. It is the over-balance of grace which enables the Christian to go on. It is because we are more sensible of the grace of God in afflictions than at other seasons, that the greatest sufferers have ever been the most eminent Christians. It is not how much we suffer, but whether grace sufficient for us is vouchsafed, that determines our growth in Christianity, and our honorable faith in God's power under sorrow. Grace made sufficient for us then, is what Christianity glories in. The conviction of this inwrought in the soul, is one end in view when "the thorn" is sent to us. We thus learn what God is, what Christ is, what grace is, what faith can trust God for, what is our own impotency, and what his adequate and surpassing power in Christ Jesus. God is self-existent and self-sufficient in himself, and he is all-sufficient and all-quickenings to us. When he is pleased under afflictions to "strengthen us with might according to his glorious power," the "feeble becomes as David;" the weak says, "I am strong;" the thorn-worn traveller feels sufficient power to pursue his journey, and the grace of God is magnified as the source of all.

4. But the discipline we are considering was designed also to place the apostle in circumstances *to behold the peculiar glory of Christ as the Redeemer of the Church*, the great "Mediator between God and man." It is the main purpose of Almighty God in the gospel to manifest himself in Christ Jesus, to demonstrate his "love in giving his only-begotten Son" to live and to die for our salvation. One end of the mis-

sion of Satan with the painful thorn, therefore, is to render Christ more than ever the peculiar object of prayer and confidence. For it was to Christ, and no one else, that the apostle addressed himself in his prayer: "I besought the Lord"—the Lord Christ,—“thrice that it might depart from me;” “and he”—the Lord Christ,—“said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore,” proceeds the apostle by way of inference, “will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ,”—the same Lord most unquestionably before addressed, and who indeed, is the only person spoken of, throughout,—“might rest,” tabernacle, abide, as the Shekinah of old, “upon me.”

I make this remark in order to point out the evidence which the passage affords for the proper divinity of Christ. Prayer is here addressed solemnly to him, as it was by Thomas, Stephen, and others; and that high religious trust, confidence, and hope is reposed in him, which constitute some of the clearest prerogatives of the Eternal God; and which, when joined with numerous other proofs, demonstrate the divine nature of our Lord. Nor is the language which assumes that grace is his gift, that he can and will be sufficient to his creatures, and that the end of his dispensation is, that his power may rest upon them, an inconsiderable confirmation of the same fundamental truth.

And is not this, then, my afflicted hearer, the sort of process which is going on in your own case? God doth not answer your first feeble prayers, that you may increase in fervency. God doth not remove your sorrows,

that you may feel the greater need of his grace. God doth not allow you to go on in an easy ordinary religion, that you may be in circumstances to see his glory in Christ Jesus. You would wish for the favour of men ; you would wish for tranquillity, health, success ; you would wish for deliverance from all trouble. You think you are free enough from self-exultation, and are convinced enough of the grace of Christ. But God thinks otherwise. He has other designs upon you. Enter into his purpose ; yield to the merciful project ; consider “the thorn” as the messenger of Christ, and that which is to prepare you for solving practically the Christian paradox, with respect to him.

For you are now ready to proceed with me to the consideration of,

III. *The strength flowing from his weakness, as thus felt, acknowledged, acted upon ;* not from his weakness in itself, but from his weakness as checking self-exultation, leading to fervent prayer, infixing a sense of the need of grace, and placing him in circumstances to behold the peculiar glory of Christ.

Here the paradox begins to open. It is now pregnant with light and truth. We are now arriving at the result of the previous discipline. Hear the apostle’s account : “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me—for when I am weak, then am I strong :” words which import that the apostle was now instructed in the design of God ; that he acquiesced in his method ; was receiving power from him ; and could rejoice in the result of the whole.

1. The apostle *had now received instruction as to the designs of God*. When the humiliating messenger first arrived, after his exaltation to the third heavens, he prayed absolutely for its removal. But this was under defective information. He knew not all the designs of his divine Master. He thought relief was only to be experienced by “the thorn” being extracted. He conceived that there was no way for him to glorify God whilst he was dejected, impeded, irritated by the “messenger of Satan.” He thought he could not stand as a conqueror, whilst the “buffeting” of the spiritual adversary continued. But the answer of Christ teaches him another lesson. He is instructed, and we also by his example, that there are two ways of God’s answering prayer; the one, by direct deliverance from troubles, the other, by sufficiency of grace; the one, by removing the thorn itself; the other, by rendering it the means of higher blessings.

2. But St. Paul’s *acquiescence in God’s method* is a further step in the result we are now contemplating. Harken to the apostle’s words: “Therefore I take pleasure”—I acquiesce, I resign myself with cheerfulness, I am contented—“with infirmities, with reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses for Christ’s sake.” Thus he now yields to his dispensation. He now sees God’s method of healing the diseases of our fallen nature. He now enters into the purposes of his grace, and his methods of humbling and purifying man, that he may afterwards exalt him. When the apostle found what God was mercifully aiming at; that sufficient grace for every emergency was to be vouchsafed; that this world was to be a state of trial and probation;



that dangers to the soul impended from every blessing of the Almighty, and even from spiritual favours and manifestations, as well as from calamities ; that a succession of sorrows might be expected, even if any one present trial should be removed ; that the most importunate prayers are not availing against this fixed method of the divine procedure ; that additional glory is brought to Christ by a state of things which allows us to behold all his excellency of power and grace—when all this filled the apostle's mind, he acquiesced, he took pleasure in the discovery ; he looked upon infirmities, and reproaches, and necessities, and persecutions for Christ's sake with another eye ; he applied to them the great principle in which he had been instructed ; he fell back into the arms of his heavenly Father, saying, with his divine Lord, “ Not my will, but thine be done.”

You observe now the paradox unfolds itself. Knowledge of God's design in our continued weakness, and acquiescence of heart in those ways of procedure, are a good beginning of strength, which is only another word for the power of sustaining with resignation, and without murmuring and impatience, the burden which God imposes.

3. And this is the next part of the result—*actual power communicated* ; “ that the power of Christ may rest upon me”—“ for my strength is perfected in thy weakness.” The apostle now found the internal might which Christ promised ; he felt his weakness, not removed indeed, but sustained ; he had something beside and beyond himself ; he was able to exercise patience, to endure pain, to abstain from unbelief, to meet reproaches, contempt, persecution, and to go on

with his work with cheerfulness. The "outward man perished," it is true, but "the inner man was renewed from day to day." Grace, like a tide, was flowing in, and bore up the vessel above the rocks and quicksands around it. As the necessity increased, the measure of grace was increased; the "power of Christ" rested, pitched its tent upon him, surrounded him, covered him, settled on him, as the glory of old on the mercy seat. The feeble creature clinging amidst his unnumbered infirmities, like the ivy to the oak, was supported in all its weakness, by the mighty strength to which it adhered.

4. Accordingly, as a last result, the apostle instead of being any longer depressed and astounded at his sufferings, *gloried in them in order that the grace of Christ might have its full display*, and all God's purposes be entirely accomplished. Hear the strange resolve: hear the paradox asserted in all its strength: "Most gladly therefore do I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "For when I am weak, then am I strong."

Happy man! Like the disciples with their master in the vessel, he is persuaded that he shall not only not sink, but shall display to others, and experience himself, the power of Christ, which, but for the storm, would not, and could not have been so manifested. He knows that the most honorable, as well as the safest state for a Christian, is not one of ease, of outward prosperity, of health, of success, of respect from those around him; but that in which the power of Christ may have most room for being magnified and acknowledged. "I can do all things through Christ

which strengtheneth me," saith the triumphant warrior : " for me to live is Christ. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

Here, then, let us pause and contemplate, before we conclude, *the Christian paradox unveiled, developed, solved, triumphant!* Let us see the strength of God sustaining human feebleness. Let us behold "the weakness of God"—to use the apostle's expression—mightier than the fancied power of man. Let us see how the strength of the flesh is overthrown, the weakness of faith raised up; how the glorying of nature is subdued, the contrition of grace exalted; how the strength and self-sufficiency of the outward man is laid low, the impotency and infirmity of the sinner magnified; the might of Satan, his "messengers," his poisoned darts, his fell purposes, defeated the "weakness" of Christ, his "messenger," his "thorn," his methods of humiliation, made more than conquerors;—in a word, all the inflation and external promise of the fallen heart detected; all the internal and real strength of Christ vindicated and established.

*But which side of the alternative are you, my dear hearers, choosing?* Is the paradox still unintelligible and displeasing to you? There are two branches of it. The strength of the flesh boasted in, with real spiritual weakness; and the infirmity of man acknowledged, and Christ's might infused. Are you still trusting to yourselves, relying on nature, looking to what you term your

strength of mind, aiming chiefly “to make a fair show in the flesh;” and shunning sorrow, the cross, the thorn, the heavenly discipline, the humiliations of Christ? Oh, consider again the whole question which has been brought before you. Tell me what this vain prowess has ever accomplished as to real spiritual religion. Confess how miserably your vaunted ability has failed you in the combat with sin and the world. Conscience speaks within your breast. You know that in the moment of sorrow and temptation, your religion, like the house built upon the sand, has sunk under its own ruins. What then will you do in the last hour, when the pleasures of sense will have been exhausted; when flattery will not cheer, nor learning soothe, nor philosophy occupy, nor poetry charm, nor self-delusion elevate. Awake, then, to the truth of your case. Rely no longer on your own strength, which is only as the swelling of a dropsy. Discover your weakness, by making an honest attempt to “repent and turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance.” The first serious endeavours of an aroused mind dissipate his former notions of unaided spiritual might. Thus he is led to seek grace from the fountain of life. The paradox gradually opens also to his mind. He sees that it involves “Christ the power of God and the wisdom.”

Finally, do you, my brethren, who are already receiving the heavenly discipline, *bring nearer to each other the two branches of the paradox*. Enter more fully into the apostle’s grateful confession, “When I am weak, then am I strong”—at the very time when I feel most sensibly my infirmities, at that crisis; in the very hour

of danger, in proportion to my perception of my own weakness ; just when Satan seemed about to triumph. “ Then am I strong ;” though the thorn rankle still, though to the eye of flesh all be hopeless. “ Then am I strong ”—but strong through the strength of Christ : strong through grace made sufficient : strong by means of thorns, and weaknesses, and reproaches, and persecutions, and necessities, which empty the heart, to make room in it for the abundance of grace : strong in the midst of contempt and disappointment, temptation and grief, which sink the valley low enough for the gigantic might of Christ to rear its lofty eminence and be clearly and distinctly seen—“ Most gladly, therefore, do I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

## S E R M O N XII.

## 2 CORINTHIANS V. 14, 15.

For the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again.

IN considering the application of the mysteries of Christianity to the human heart, we have noticed the danger of false conceptions of the divine character ;<sup>1</sup> The reasonableness of the demand which Christianity makes upon man ;<sup>2</sup> The importance of distinguishing between the false and true method of learning the doctrine of Christ ;<sup>3</sup> The greatness of God the source of comfort to the contrite ;<sup>4</sup> And strength derived from weakness.<sup>5</sup>

In all these topics no inconsiderable traces of beneficial tendencies were manifest. But in the present subject, these tendencies will be yet more distinctly observable. For if Christianity first detects, and then remedies the selfishness of the human heart, she will indeed prove that her designs upon man are great and excellent. And this she proposes to us in the text. She calls on man to live no longer to himself, but to his

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Saviour and Lord. She proposes to him to overcome the selfishness of nature by the power of divine love.

This is, then, our topic, the commanding motive which Christianity employs to produce a devoted and benevolent life.

In considering which, we shall call your attention to the End which Christianity has in view; the Motive she proposes; and the deliberate Act of judgment by which she connects the motive with the end.

I. We begin with *the end which the religion of the Bible keeps ever in view*—"That we should live not unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us and rose again."

Man since the fall is a selfish creature. Selfishness is the corruption of that strong principle of self-preservation and self-love, which was implanted in the breast of man for the most beneficial purposes by his great Creator. Selfishness is an attention to our own interests, void of regard for those of others. Instead of seeking what is really good for ourselves, according to the command of God; and in connection with the duties we owe to others and the general happiness of mankind, it seeks merely what is apparently good; what seems desirable at the moment to its own perverted judgment and excited appetites and passions; and in ways often contrary to the command of God, and without respect to the fair interests and claims of others. Selfishness is blinded and ungoverned self-love.

No one can look into his own breast without detecting something of this unreasonable regard to self. All admit and complain of the prevailing evil. It is the

theme of declamation to the moralist, the statesman, the philosopher. The institutions of civil society have this one object in view, to prevent the selfishness of men breaking forth into open outrage and crime. The maxim of law which governs our jurisprudence, that no man is to be a judge in his own cause, would but for this, be unnecessary and absurd. The selfishness of man is so strong and steady a principle, that it is taken by our Lord as a good practical basis for our general conduct to others: "Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them." And amongst the wise of this world it is invariably considered that you cannot safely reckon on the voluntary fulfilment of engagements, when the immediate interests of the parties strongly oppose.

Yet no man naturally allows of this in his own particular case, to any thing like its true extent. We are so blinded, each of us, by this evil, that we cannot discern in our own tempers and conduct what the same active principle leads us to see clearly, and resent with keenness, in others. How heinous and strange appear injuries and affronts done to ourselves; and how light and trivial the affronts and unkindnesses which we show to others. How positive do persons who dispute about the smallest amount of property appear, each that he is right; whilst those who are indifferent spectators, probably see how widely both err. In matters where the spirit of party creeps in, or any petty interests of our own or our family are concerned, how soon every thing is distorted. In cases, again, of evasion, fraud, craft, backbiting, the taking up and propagating of evil reports; how differently things appear if we do them

to others, from what they do if others presume to inflict them on us. How much more calm, also, is our own judgment of the very same points after a lapse of years, and when the selfish passions are extinguished. How naturally people, again, talk of themselves, of their own state, plans, health, duties, difficulties ; unconscious how much it detracts from their influence in the judgment of others. And what is contemporary biography, but the language of flattery trembling before family-selfishness ? In questions of Church discipline, ceremonies, and government, how uniformly the disputants magnify the importance of the points they espouse ! The quarrels of theologians have too often been acrimonious in an inverse ratio with the real moment of the points controverted. The extraordinary admiration, also, attached to any one who during a long series of years has been remarkably free from selfishness, shows the opinion of mankind both as to the excellency and the rarity of the attainment.

From this deeply-seated evil spring much of the worldliness, vanity, disordered passions, contentions, calumnies, crimes, injuries, wars, rapines, murders, which fill the world. All the varied passions and inclinations of men are but so many parts of selfishness. As when a mirror is broken and shivered, your countenance seems to be multiplied in all the fragments, although it is still the same image ; so the selfishness of the heart, says Bossuet, appears in a thousand broken and disordered inclinations and actions, though it still shows itself the same in every one.

Christianity proposes, then, as her high end to begin the effectual cure of this malady of fallen man. The

aim of the gospel is to put a stop to this miserable life of self, and to inspire a holy, disinterested, and benevolent temper of mind, governed by the will of God ; embracing all that is good in the principle of self-love, but purifying it from its debasing alloys, elevating it to a nobler and wider range of exertion, and superadding all those habits and motives which spring from the person and work of the great Redeemer.

With this view, Christianity first opens the real magnitude and extent of the evil. Other systems admit some of the leading effects which selfishness has produced ; the gospel alone traces it up to its true source,—the fall of man and his apostacy from God. Christianity teaches, that God “ made man upright, but that he hath sought out many inventions.” Christianity teaches, that the living inordinately to ourselves is not the original state of man, but the effect of his revolt from his Maker, of the rebellion of the creature against his Creator and Sovereign, the departure of man, a dependant being, from God the centre of his happiness. St. Austin observes, that “ when man fell from righteousness and was precipitated from God to the creature, he first fell upon self, as upon a jutting rock.” Till this fatal malady of selfishness, then, is cured, nothing is done. A plague to himself and others man is and must be. All attempts to heal the state of the world whilst this worst of poisons is allowed to diffuse itself, is only to conceal the deeply-seated wound, and drive the irritation inward upon the vitals. There is no steady regard to truth, no real public spirit, no superiority to names and parties, no trustworthiness in trying circumstances, no heartfelt ge-

nerosity, no gratitude, no self-denial for the good of others.

Christianity restores order and peace to man, both in private and in society, by teaching him to feel, deplore, oppose, subdue this state of disordered self-love; first of all in himself, and then in others; by bringing him to see that it is "enmity against God;" that it constitutes the very essence of rebellion and iniquity, a "death in trespasses and sins." Christianity restores happiness to man by disposing him to love his neighbour as himself, and to seek his own happiness, not by a disordered and inordinate self-love, but by a moderated and well-governed regard to his own interests, in connection with the interests of others, and derived in part from them; and all subordinated to a supreme love to Christ his Saviour.

What a high end is this. What a tendency is there here to man's happiness. What a noble object. It is like its great Author. It goes to the root of all the moral disorders of man, and accomplishes at one stroke what all the particular statutes and enactments of a thousand laws could not reach. Governed by this, men would move like the planets in the universe, not in exorbitant and eccentric courses, but in their divinely allotted orbits, revolving around the centre of light and harmony and joy.

II. But it will naturally be asked, *What motive can the Christian religion supply to produce this mighty effect?* We answer, with the apostle in the text, "the love of Christ constraineth us."

The death and resurrection of Christ for the re-

demption of man from the guilt and power of this very selfishness, and all the other consequences of the fall, constrain us, when they are once duly apprehended, to become the willing servants of "Him who thus loved us, and gave himself for us."

We are thus brought back, not merely to exercise benevolence and the love of our neighbour, but to love our Saviour in the first place ; and then to take in our own true interest and those of others, whilst we are travelling onwards to glorify and honour that Saviour.

Here, then, is a new principle set at work ; a passion stronger than selfishness ; an antagonist-power of adequate force. For what can arouse the affections of a reasonable and immortal being, sensible of his fearful guilt before God, and awakened to see the gulf of misery in which he lies, if the love of Christ in dying for him a sacrifice upon the cross, doth not ?

Accordingly, when a true penitent is once convinced of his guilt before God as a selfish, proud, perverse, unreasonable creature ; when he discovers the obligations he has been violating all his life ; and when he beholds the Saviour nailed to the accursed tree, putting himself in our stead, transferring all our iniquities to himself, dying the just for the unjust, and made sin for us ; and when he finds gradually a relief from the agonies of his own conscience by faith in this mysterious transaction ; he experiences a new kind of life ; the blessed Spirit renews him in the spirit of his mind ; and of this new life the characteristic is love to the great Author of it.

And ought there not to be, and is there not, an energy, a power, a transcendent influence in the love

of Christ in proportion to the infinite excellency of his person and the depth of his sufferings for us, which carries away the soul, which makes difficulties easy, which inspires a holy dedication of every power to his service, which tears us away from the fetters of a debased selfishness, and makes us love our neighbour as a part of our love to “Him who died for us and rose again?”

Yes, my brethren, as selfishness has robbed our Maker of his right over us, and brought on a love of self, even to a contempt of God—*amorem sui usque ad contemptum Dei*—so Christ tears us from ourselves by a kind of violence, declares war with this self-love, and brings into its place a love of God, even to a contempt of self—*amorem Dei usque ad contemptum sui*. The Spirit of God overturns the throne of selfishness, and then shows us something of that ravishing beauty which is alone capable of satisfying the vast capacities of the soul and swaying the sceptre there. So that the penitent, constrained before by self-love, now gradually learns to say, “the love of Christ constraineth” me; it constrains me, inciting me against myself; it constrains me, carrying me above myself; it constrains me, detaching me from myself; it constrains me, uniting me to God; it constrains me, not less by the movement of a holy hatred to self, than by the transport of a holy affection for God. <sup>1</sup>

What then can be so exalted and powerful as this motive which Christianity employs! It is as superior to all human motives as the end proposed is more elevated than human projects. It has the stamp of divinity upon it. The same mighty affections which

<sup>1</sup> Bossuet.

bind us to the throne of God, unite us in love with our fellow creatures.

III. Shall we then pause here, in order to form, with our apostle, that *deliberate judgment which connects the motive with the end of our Lord's Death and Resurrection*? Yes, we pause, because our text teaches us to do so. We pause, because if the apostle interposes an act of judgment between the end and the motive, there must be some important reason for it. Yes; there is this of peculiarity in religious affections, that they listen to all that is calm in argument, as well as follow all that is warm in impulse. This is the proper check upon self-deception, upon hasty emotions, and mere movements of the passions, which are neither permanent nor holy.

And what deliberation does the apostle take? "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again."

1. This judgment, then, reposes *on the fact of man's state as a sinner*. The state of man was such as required the sacrifice of the death of Christ. If men had not been dead, lost, condemned, absorbed in selfishness, and exposed to the wrath of God in consequence, it would not have been needful that Christ should have "died for our sins, and risen again for our justification." "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." But if one died for all, we infer, we judge, we deliberately conclude, that previously to that act, all were dead; dead in trespasses and sins; dead



in selfishness and alienation from the life of God ; dead and cut off from the sources of life, purity, and joy in God ; dead and without spiritual affections or communion with God, but on the contrary under his just wrath and condemnation.

This is the key to all the other parts of the subject. The whole end of Christianity and all the motives it employs, depend, in point of effect, on our making the practical confession of the apostle our own ; depend on our feeling personally and individually that in our natural state we are selfish, blind, disordered creatures, and dead before God. This is the first step in the judgment.

2. The second follows, *laying down an important distinction* ; pointing out a broad transition from one state to another, from death unto life, from the condition of those who were dead in selfishness to that of those who live to God ; “ We thus judge, that if Christ died for all, then were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they which live.” There are then those who live ; there are those who are quickened by the power of the Holy Ghost, who are raised up together with Christ, who partake of a new life with its appropriate perceptions, feelings, hopes, fears, joys, sorrows. These stand in contrast with their own former selves, and with all who still remain in the state of death in which Christ found the whole human race. Here an important, an all-important transition is noted. We can never feel the commanding motive which Christianity employs, till we know something of the state of heart to which that motive is addressed. This is the second part of the act of judgment. As in the first creation, Adam, till God “ breathed into him the

breath of life and he became a living soul," was a mass merely of limbs, and form, and external features, without any power of performing the actions of a reasonable creature ; so the fallen, selfish heart of man, dead to spiritual things, feels nothing of the interior life of love to God and man, till the blessed Spirit imparts a new and divine principle. Notions, forms of religion, creeds, knowledge, profession, will never do instead of this spiritual life which only can give to all their excellency and force.

3. A solemn obligation of *fulfilling the design of this great change*, is deduced as the conclusion of the whole : " We thus judge that they that live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again." It is quite clear, then, that the mark and evidence of those who have thus " passed from death unto life," is exactly this, that they no longer live the selfish life they once did, but fulfil the obligations of that death of Christ which is the source of their pardon, and the motive to their new obedience. They judge that this was the express end of the death and resurrection of Christ. This is not an accidental, but direct consequence. It is not a hasty resolve, but the result of a calm deliberation on the mysteries of redemption, and the obligations of the life they have received thereby. It is the very scope and design of the whole vast undertaking of Christ ; enjoined by it, inseparable from it.

If such, then, be the high end which Christianity proposes to herself, such the exalted motive, and such the deliberate judgment which connects the two, then allow me, in application,

*To direct your attention to an emphatical word in the text, on which I have not hitherto fixed your notice.* The word HENCEFORTH, intervenes between the two main branches of the text ; “ that they which live, should not *henceforth* live unto themselves.” This marks an era, a memorable time in the life of man. This erects a barrier between two periods of life : the one past, when we lived unto ourselves ; the other future, when we live unto Christ, and to our brother for Christ’s sake.

Where shall we then, put this “ henceforth ” ? Can it be truly said of us, that though we once lived a worldly, sensual, formal life like others ; though we once were dead in selfishness and folly, in pride and appetite, in forgetfulness of the soul and eternity ; yet God has been pleased to bring us to spiritual life, to rescue us from the gulf of sin and misery into which we were sinking deeper and deeper, and to teach us to know ourselves and our Saviour ; and that we are now aiming by the constraining power of his love, to live unto him ? Can we say this ? Then put the “ henceforth ” there ; that is the remarkable period. From that time—whether imperceptibly brought on as to the specific effect, as reason and conscience were matured, by the grace of God resting on the due use of the sacraments, education, and other means of grace ; or more distinctly marked off by some stroke of affliction ; or occasioned by the recurrence of solemn addresses from Holy Scripture ; or dated from our preparation for the affecting rite of Confirmation—whatever was the mode of the divine operation, the change is to be dated from the time that we began to live “ unto Him that died for us and rose again.”

Continue then in your course. Run the heavenly race. Examine your progress at each recurring period of receiving the body and blood of your Saviour Christ. Detect the vast remains of selfishness in your heart, spirit, and conduct. Pursue them out in their meanderings. Imbibe more adequately the commanding motive of the love of Christ. “*Qui amat non laborat*,” says Augustine—nothing is painful to love, it fills the soul, it makes it forget all other things, it changes the taste, it is ever active, ever alert, ever studious, ever watchful for opportunities. “It is in virtue of a *delectatio victrix*,” says a modern author, “that Christianity makes us its own.”

But if there is no point in your moral history where we can erect this memorial; or if the matter be doubtful; or if declines, like a land-flood, have sapped the barrier, then I beseech you this day to begin; I pray you to set up the ensign here. Henceforth, I earnestly entreat you to enter on a religious life. Henceforth examine the proofs of a selfish and dead state of heart. Henceforth consider the claims God has over you; and your fearful guilt in having lived so long unto yourself. Let “the time past of your life suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles.” Henceforth live to Christ, live to your neighbour, live to the gospel, live to prayer, live to your Bible, live to your own happiness, live to heaven. This only, will bring you back to that for which man was created, and without which he must be for ever miserable—to derive all his happiness from God; to subject his will to that of his Maker in the revelation he has made to him of it in Christ Jesus; and to seek his own felicity in harmonious connection with the present and eternal happiness of others.

## S E R M O N XIII.

LUKE xi. 11—13.

If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

INDIA is a vast solitude. Christians are often stationed for years where they have but very partial, if any, public means of grace. Sickness also detains a large proportion of them for considerable periods from any regular attendance on the worship of God, even where it is celebrated. India, then, is the place for prayer. The Christian wherever he goes may carry his Bible and his devotions with him. One obvious instance, indeed, of the beneficial tendency of Christianity is, that it teaches and disposes man to pray; and thus directs him how to obtain constant relief under his necessities, and perpetual aids for understanding and performing all the other parts of his duty. Heathenism knows nothing of the only true object of prayer; Moham-  
medanism rejects the only Mediator between God and man. Christianity alone presents to us the one living and true God; not in the monstrous and cruel aspects of the Hindoo deities, but as a merciful and most

tender Father; not through the intervention of a war-like and licentious impostor, but through his most holy and only-begotten Son, first dying as a sacrifice for the pardon of our sins, and then obtaining for us the grace and influences of the Holy Ghost to renew and comfort our hearts.

It is in these two respects that I propose to consider our present important subject, Prayer, as it is set forth in the text: First, The object of it, our heavenly Father; and, secondly, The chief blessing to be sought for by it, the Holy Spirit.

This will form a natural commencement of the THIRD MAIN DIVISION of our entire course, *The Christian life and conduct*. For, after tracing out some features of the bearing and tendencies of Christianity in its great mysteries,<sup>1</sup> and in the application of them to the human heart,<sup>2</sup> such topics as we are now entering on,—prayer; the Holy Scriptures interpreted by affliction;<sup>3</sup> the dangers of the world;<sup>4</sup> false philosophy exposed;<sup>5</sup> consolation under the loss of friends;<sup>6</sup> and the memory strengthened for retaining religious truth,<sup>7</sup>—will not improperly succeed.

In order to set before us *the true object of Prayer*, our Lord describes the feelings and conduct of an earthly parent, and then illustrates thereby the tender character of our heavenly Father. He reasons with us on the common principles of our nature. He appeals to the very heart of parents. He seems to have looked

<sup>1</sup> Sermon I to VI.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon VII to XII.

Sermon XIV.

<sup>4</sup> Sermon XV.

<sup>5</sup> Sermon XVI.

<sup>6</sup> Sermon XVII.

<sup>7</sup> Sermon XVIII.

around on his auditory, and addressed himself to such of them among the crowd as were fathers of families, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father." He does not put the case argumentatively, but calls on every parent to say what would be his feelings and conduct.

1. The appeal proceeds on the supposition of various cruel and unfatherly acts being done in certain cases towards a child—refusal, mockery, deception.

"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father"—for what is indispensable to his temporal existence, and without which he must die—would you refuse the request? Would you deny him the bread, the fish, the egg he asked for; not dainties, but the most ordinary articles of food; not requested by a stranger, but by your own son, your flesh and blood, your beloved offspring? Would any of you that are parents act thus hardly, cruelly, unnaturally? Such is our Lord's appeal.

But this is not all. The case supposes mockery and insult. Would a father, not only reject the suit, but mock and insult his son with a stone instead of bread, a serpent instead of a fish, and a scorpion in the place of the egg? Would he thus add derision to cruelty? Would he mock him by giving him what was not capable of being eaten, a stone; or what was disgusting, a serpent; or what might be noxious and poisonous, a scorpion? Will a father thus turn to ridicule the craving wants of his "own son that serveth him," and leave him to perish with mock gifts?

But there is, further, the idea of deception and imposition in the conduct supposed. The things said

to be given, though useless and injurious, are yet very similiar in first appearance to those asked. It is well known that there are abundance of stones which exactly resemble some kinds of bread. The similitude between many sorts of fish, particularly of the eel kind, and serpents, need not be pointed out. And the learned Bochart informs us, that the body of the white scorpion is very much like an egg; and that in Judea the size is not very different, as the scorpions about Jerusalem were particularly large. The supposition then is, would the father attempt to deceive and impose upon the poor boy with what had the semblance of wholesome food, which the child would believe to be what he asked for, but which on taking away and looking at more closely, he would find to be useless or destructive?

These various suppositions are so monstrous that something like our Lord's words had in many places become proverbial amongst the Greeks and Romans, as well as amongst the Jews. Seneca calls a benefit grudgingly given by an avaricious person, stony bread.<sup>1</sup> And Plautus speaks of one who brings a stone in one hand, and shews bread in the other.<sup>2</sup>

Our Lord therefore in making this appeal, adopts illustrations which were probably proverbial amongst his audience. Every one that heard him, perfectly knew at least, that, instead of acting in this hard, contemptuous and deceitful manner, parents constantly laboured to give the best gifts in their power to their children.

<sup>1</sup> Panem lapidosum.  
ostentat alterâ.

<sup>2</sup> Alterâ manu fert lapidem, panem



2. On this admission our Lord founds his argument : "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?"

The argument is from the less to the greater ; from the feeble and mixed affections of the best of men to their offspring, to the perfect and unmingled goodness of the infinitely holy God. The comparison lies between the two fathers—the one a heavenly, the other an earthly one ; and this in a double respect, first as to the natural attributes and qualities, and, secondly, as to moral attributes of each parent.

As to the natural powers and attributes, then, of the earthly parent, independently of the fall and corruption of man, what measure of proportion is there between them and those of the incomprehensible and infinite God ?

Man's affections for his children are feeble, limited, inconstant. His knowledge of what is good for them, partial and obscure ; his power of helping them, slight and capable of being opposed and thwarted by accidents ; his means of supply, contracted and liable to diminution by all he expends ; whilst he is capable only of being in one place at a time, for the purpose of affording even the partial help he has in his power. Jacob was not present with his beloved Joseph, nor the Shunamite mother with her son, in the hour of exigency. The parents of Moses were compelled to entrust the babe to the ark of bulrushes and the river. Hagar could do nothing for Ishmæl but cast him under a bush, saying, "Let me not see the death of the child." The widow of Nain could only follow the bier of the son whom she could not save. Nor could the nobleman

do more than entreat Christ, saying, "Sir, come down ere my child die."

The inference is obvious. If, notwithstanding this feebleness of natural attributes, the earthly parent is so far from refusing or mocking his children with vain or injurious gifts, that he knows how to bestow what is suitable and good upon them; how much more shall our heavenly Father, who carries out to an infinite extent all those powers and attributes, which in the earthly parent are so faint as scarcely to bear the most remote resemblance to them, give "good gifts," in the highest sense of the expression, to his children who ask him? Is it possible for a moment to suppose that such a heavenly Father will give a stone for bread, or a serpent for a fish, or for an egg a scorpion? Is he not infinitely kind and good? Does he not love his children with an affection, in comparison with which that of earthly parents sinks into nothing? And is he less wise than he is good? Is he not "the only wise God?" Does he not know every thing that is really best for us—the time, manner, circumstances for accomplishing his designs? What is the feeble glimmering of human knowledge compared with divine? Did not God choose the best gifts for Abraham, and Jacob, and Job, and Hezekiah, and his other servants of old? Nor is his power less than his goodness and wisdom: "Is any thing too hard, for the Lord?" Can any "stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?" And does not his all-sufficiency, again, stand in contrast to the narrow stores of the human parent; as well as his omnipresence to the single spot where only the earthly parent can act?

But there is a second branch of the comparison between the two parents, of the greatest importance. Our heavenly Father is of infinite and unspotted holiness ; his moral attributes are unspeakably pure ; he is entirely free from that "evil," which since the fall of Adam, infects the nature of man. This is stated in a clause interposed by our Saviour when deducing his argument : "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children." The corruption of nature, which is continually asserted and taught in Holy Scripture, is here incidentally adverted to, as a well known and admitted fact. Earthly parents are "evil." They are sinful creatures. They partake of a fallen, evil, ruined nature ; have many sinful passions, many prejudices, many partialities. They have much ignorance arising from this their fallen condition. Sometimes envy, avarice, ambition, love of pleasure, ostentation, pride, interpose in their judgment of what constitutes their children's good. A want of due perception of spiritual and eternal things often leads them to ruin their children by worldly examples, pleasures, and pursuits. Jacob's partiality to Joseph exposed him to the envy of his brethren by the gift of the many-coloured robe. Rebecca taught deceit to her son, and encouraged him to impose most dishonestly on Isaac and Esau. The mother of Micah was little able to give good gifts unto her son, in whose presence she cursed about her idolatrous images. Nor could the daughter of Herodias, when dancing before Herod, and asking at her mother's instruction the head of John Baptist, have learned from that wicked parent many lessons of purity and virtue. It is implied, also, by the apostle's

caution on the subject, that fathers are prone to "provoke their children to wrath." And when the author of the epistle to the Hebrews exhorts us to be subject to the "Father of our spirits and live," he does it by instituting a contrast between him and "the fathers of our flesh, who verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure;" that is, with wantonness and caprice.

But I need not say how infinitely free from all imperfection and moral evil, or any the least approach to it, our Almighty parent is. His inconceivably holy character exalts him as much above us in respect of our sinfulness, as his infinitely glorious nature does as regards our feebleness and limited powers.

The argument, then, will now stand thus. If earthly parents, weak in themselves as creatures, and often mistaken and perverted in their judgment as sinful creatures, are yet led by natural affection to avoid refusing, mocking, deceiving their offspring; and, on the contrary, give them good gifts: how much more will that glorious Parent whose abode is heaven, and who is infinitely exalted above all the defects and errors incident to man, not give a stone, as it were, for bread, or a scorpion for an egg, but will rather bestow the highest and best gifts on his children!

3. The full force however of this expression, "how much more," it is impossible to state; because no one can adequately understand either the fulness and corruption of the parents whose abode is earth, and who are "the fathers of our flesh;" or the almighty and infinite purity of him who is the "Father of our spirits."

This is, then, the conception we are to form of the object of our worship. We are to think of him as of a tender parent, ready and able to help us. We are to think of him as the father of the prodigal in our Lord's parable, who "saw him when he was a great way off, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him."

This just conception of our God is most important as an encouragement to prayer. Without something of it, we cannot pray aright, we cannot rise up to the Deity, we can have no filial feelings, no expansive desires, no childlike confidence, no meek and patient resignation.

Nor is it easy to form this just notion of our heavenly Father's benignant, attractive, condescending character. To presume indeed generally on the mercy of God, when we are careless about religion, is abundantly easy. But to see God infinitely great and holy, and yet good; displeased with sin and with us as sinners, and yet good; just and righteous in the sanction of his law, and yet good; utterly rejecting all ways of propitiating him except the new and living one which he hath consecrated for us in the sacrifice of his Son, and yet good—to see all this, and yet to believe that he is a tender Father infinitely more able and disposed to bestow on us good gifts than any earthly parent, is no easy matter. It can only proceed from that deep and affecting sense of our own sinfulness, demerit, and desert of punishment; and from that humble faith in the scriptural character of God, as in "Christ reconciling the world unto himself," which the teaching of the blessed Spirit communicates.

It is Satan's common art to represent God to the sinner at first as easy to be pacified ; as too merciful to punish eternally any except a few outrageous transgressors ; and as accepting our religious homage, though without any change of heart, or reliance on the atonement of Christ, or new course of conduct. But when this policy fails, he next labours to terrify us from God by false conceptions of his severity, justice, righteousness, awful judgments ; by the "straitness of the gate, and the narrowness of the way which leadeth to life."

To oppose these suggestions, we must hold fast by the Fatherly character of God in Christ Jesus as set forth by our Lord in the text, to every sincere and penitent suppliant. We must attribute indeed, and justly, all our misery to ourselves ; but to him we should ascribe all goodness, compassion, and truth. We should perpetually argue with our distrustful heart, and say, Would an earthly parent, though evil, know how to give good gifts unto his children ; and shall not my heavenly Father much more vouchsafe me good things, if I devoutly ask him ?

But this leads us to consider,

## II. *The chief blessing to be sought for in prayer.*

"How much more," saith our Lord, "shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

This, then, is the brief but emphatic direction as to the blessings we are first to sue for. After this careful removal of false conceptions of the object of prayer ; after this lovely character drawn of the Almighty God ; after this comparison of him with an

earthly parent, this is the result. We are to ask, first and primarily, though not exclusively, for the grace and influences of the Holy Spirit; his power in quickening the heart to spiritual feeling and life; his energy in new creating the soul to holiness; his consolation, and strength and support in bearing up the feeble suppliant, and in applying to him all the mighty blessings of the redemption of Christ.

Several remarks may be offered on this most important direction.

1. It teaches us, of course, that we are to pray, in the first place, *for spiritual blessings*, and not for temporal and external. If we chiefly pray for health, success in our affairs, children, deliverance from calamities, prosperity in a particular undertaking, we pray not aright. These are neither the most important blessings in themselves, nor the most needful for us. They are not absolutely good gifts. They are nowhere expressly promised. Prayer, to be acceptable, must be offered up for spiritual blessings principally.

2. The particular spiritual blessing here promised is placed by our Lord *at the head of his religion*, and is therefore to be sought for with more earnestness. He delivered the direction twice, and in the same solemn terms; once early in his ministry, in the sermon on the Mount; and, again, after an interval of a twelvemonth, in the words of the text. He connected it also with that previous most remarkable invitation to “ask and seek and knock” for spiritual blessings, to which is added the condescending assurance, that “whosoever asked should receive, and

whosoever sought should find, and to him that knocked, the door should be opened." After making this commanding promise, our Lord pronounces the appeal of the text. The blessing of the Holy Spirit therefore, in which it all terminates, appears of transcendent moment; it stands at the head of the Christian religion; it is the introductory blessing, which they that first ask for the heavenly road, and seek for everlasting salvation, and knock at mercy's gate, indispensably need; it constitutes the first step necessary to all succeeding ones.

3. This inference is confirmed by the circumstance that the expression *good gifts* used in the first clause of the text, and which would naturally lead us to look for the repetition of it in the second, is replaced by the words, *His Holy Spirit*. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children"—this is the first branch of the argument, and would seem to require that the second should stand thus, "how much more shall your heavenly Father give good gifts" (or "good things" as, it stands in the parallel passage of St. Matthew) to them that ask him." The reason, then, of the remarkable change of language surely must be, that "good gifts" and "the Holy Spirit" are equivalent blessings to a sinner like man—a most weighty consideration truly, and enhancing the duty of our prayers being chiefly offered for this particular benefit.

4. The direction is yet further raised in relative importance by considering, that afterwards, when our Lord was leaving his disciples and about to return to his Father, *the special blessing promised them was*



*no other than this*, as we have seen in a former discourse.<sup>1</sup> The blessing indeed which causes the dispensation of the gospel to bear the name and character of “the dispensation of the Spirit,” and for the sake of which our Lord declares, “it was expedient for him that he should go away,” must indeed be a fundamental, primary, indispensable benefit.

And so it appears, and is; for the very first thing the awakened soul is conscious of, is *the need of some help and aid to pray*; faith to approach God; holy confidence to enter into the immediate presence of the only Potentate; power to draw near to the great and blessed God. And it is the Holy Spirit who supplies this necessity.

Our Lord therefore in directing us, as he does in the text, exhorts us to pray in the first instance for that blessing which will enable us to pray in every subsequent moment of our heavenly race. For we are to “pray always;” to “pray without ceasing;” to “continue in prayer;” to “watch and pray;” to “pray always with all prayer and supplication;” to be “careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, to make our requests known unto God.” And how is this to be done, but by that Holy Spirit, who “helpeth,” as the apostle says, “our infirmities; for we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

Again, it is the Holy Spirit which assists us *in understanding and applying aright to our own hearts*

<sup>1</sup> Sermon vi.

*and lives, the inspired Scriptures.* As prayer is the state of mind which we are ever to cultivate ; so the Bible is the sole authoritative guide of our faith and and practice, which we are continually to study. The Holy Spirit's effectual influences are as essential to the latter as to the former branch of the Christian life. When our Lord delivered the words of the text, he had advanced far in the course of his public ministry. He was soon about to accomplish his sacrifice. The New Testament was then to be gradually indited by his immediate disciples, "moved by the Holy Ghost." The New Testament, together with the Old, was to be the standing external guide of the Church, the sole primary rule of truth, the main nourishment of the spiritual life in the soul. Next to prayer, the study of God's holy Word was to be the business of Christians in all succeeding ages.

One reason, then, of our Lord's directing us to pray in the first place for the Holy Spirit, was, that we might understand and use aright the blessed Bible. For the written word of God without the Holy Spirit, can never illuminate or save ; "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (whether written or spoken) ; "for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." God might indeed, so far as we can judge, have given us a revelation so full of brightness as to need no additional light for our apprehending it aright. Or he might have granted us a Revelation so entirely above the human capacity, except as to some positive duties, as to render all aid useless. But he has done neither. We have a Revelation so obscure to our corrupted

powers, that it is only to be apprehended by additional aids ; and yet so bright in all its practical discoveries and directions, that with that aid, it is capable of being understood and used by the humblest inquirer. God has therefore been pleased to unite with his Revelation a promise of the Holy Spirit to open our understandings, that we may understand it aright. The infinite importance therefore of praying in the first place for this gracious help need not be pointed out.

And why should I enumerate, if it even were possible, *all the subsequent blessings to be sought for from the blessed Author of life and grace*, when a spirit of prayer is vouchsafed and divine knowledge of the Scriptures obtained ? Why should I say that every doctrine, every mystery, every command, every promise, every invitation, every warning of that holy Book is to be believed, acted upon, received, applied by the aid of the Holy Ghost. Where would be our repentance for sin, where our contrition before God, where our faith in the obedience unto death of the blessed Saviour, where our spiritual life, where our denial of the world, the flesh, and the devil, where our love to God and man, where our victories over the temptations of the great adversary, where our confession of Christ before men, where our strength and consolation in losses and afflictions, where our recovery from declines from God, where our continuance in the narrow path of life and grace, where our support amidst the pains of death, if it were not for the Holy Ghost ? Prayer is the grand secret in the soul's salvation, because prayer brings down upon us the grace of the divine agent, by which the Holy Scriptures are first perceived aright,

and then taken as the chart over the stormy, dangerous sea of life.

Let these two great topics, then, of the object of prayer and of the chief blessing to be sought for by it, be united in our minds, that we may be enabled to *resist the various temptations to despondency which arise in the breast of the sincere Christian*. If difficulties present themselves to us in the scheme of Revelation, if objections on the part of infidelity and scepticism harass us, if obscurities on the mysteries of Revelation interpose a thick cloud, as it were, between us and our God, if musings on the entrance of evil, or the secret purposes of the Almighty, or his merciful will as the source of all grace, appear to our petty minds to involve contradictions—or if, on the other hand, discouragements spring up from an overwhelming perception of our own unworthiness, from the delays of the Almighty in answering our prayer, from depression and weakness of faith, from our apprehension that we do not pray aright, from our small attainments and advances, or from painful recollection of our declines from God—from which ever class of considerations despondency rushes in, let us oppose to both the two topics of our text; let us grasp firmly the belief that God is a tender, compassionate Father, and believe his assurance that he will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Whilst you cultivate a childlike temper towards the great God; whilst you approach him as a Father in Christ Jesus; whilst you believe that he is infinitely wise, gracious, and holy, though you cannot in all respects perceive the reasons of his dispensations; whilst

you are humbly praying to him and studying his Holy Scripture under the influences of his Spirit ; and whilst you act conformably to those sacred feelings and practices, you cannot fail of salvation. You are in the right path. The gracious, paternal character of God will never deceive you ; he will never give you a stone for bread, nor for a fish a serpent. He will give you, on the contrary, all good gifts by giving you his Holy Spirit, which leads and conducts to them. Act only agreeably to your prayers in your whole behaviour, and your prayers will bring you to the ultimate enjoyment of a heavenly Father's presence and love.

*But let those who neglect, instead of receiving, and acting upon, the two points of our text, be warned ere it be too late.* Shall all this grace and compassion of our heavenly Father be, as to you, in vain ? Will you yourselves turn the bread he offers you into a stone, as it were, by your impenitence and hardness of heart ? Will you convert the fish and egg into a serpent and scorpion, so to speak, by perverting the wholesome nourishment of his gospel to controversy, scepticism, heresy, human ends, your own lusts ? Do you continually experience, or exercise, the kindness of the earthly parent, and will you mock at and condemn the goodness of your heavenly Father ?

Remember, the direction of our text implies a COMMAND : it binds it upon every human being to whom the Revelation of Christ comes, as his indispensable duty, to believe the kindness and compassion of the divine character, and to ask of him this gift of the Holy Spirit. If God call on us to pray, and condescend to

direct us what to pray for, and illustrate his own tenderness by what occurs daily in the case of earthly parents; our guilt, if we continue to live without attention to this duty, is greatly augmented.

And observe, the text entirely turns on the sinner's application to him for grace, or not. The promise is to them "that ask him." Instead of saying, as the former part of the text might lead us to expect, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to his children," our Lord changes the expression (as was the case with regard to the term, good gifts), and substitutes, "to them that ask him," in order to remove, as it were, every possible doubt from the mind of a sinner when first turning to him. Thus the encouragement is made dependant on the simple asking. The very desire for the blessing is constituted the qualification; our prayer the condition required, our supplications the warrant.<sup>1</sup>

Cease, then, your negligence and forgetfulness of God. Begin to pray. Let this day be the commencement of a new life. Soon may the door of mercy be closed for ever. Soon may prayer become impossible, or useless. In hell the rich man prayed in vain.

Now is, then, the moment of mercy; every thing depends on prayer. Prayer is the ladder which joins earth and heaven. Prayer brings God and man together. Prayer unites the sinner with the Saviour. Prayer brings us before the best of Fathers for the best of gifts, the Holy Spirit. Prayer is the first and last duty of a guilty, feeble creature. By prayer

<sup>1</sup> A similar encouragement is noted, Sermon v, on John vi. 37.

we begin a life of religion. By prayer we press on in it. By prayer we enter eternity. Fain would I unite the whole of this congregation in one determination, one duty, one design, one endeavour, one solemn resolution—to pray, to pray more for the Holy Spirit. Fain would I say of every hitherto careless and ungodly person, what was said of St. Paul at his conversion: “Behold, he prayeth.” And fain would I hope, that when our time of departure shall severally come, we may all of us die with the prayer of St. Stephen upon our lips, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

## SERMON XIV.

### PSALM cxix. 71.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.

“AFFLICTION,” says Luther, “is the theology of Christians; I never understood the Bible, till I was in trouble.” Nor is this wonderful. For as the Scriptures are addressed to “the poor in spirit,” they can be fully understood only by those whom the heavenly discipline has subdued for the lesson.

This is, then, our next subject as respects the Christian life and conduct, The Holy Scripture interpreted by affliction. In considering which, we must notice the Trials which befall the servants of God; explain the Instructions in God's word which they are the means of communicating; and show the Result produced.

1. “Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” Sorrow is the child of transgression. When man fell, he departed from God, the fountain of felicity, and became the source of misery to himself and others; he is now a wandering sheep entangled in the wilderness, far from his fold. His own disordered passions, coming in conflict with like unruly affections in others, and both aggravated by the just retri-



bution of Almighty God, render this world a scene of confusion, disappointment, affliction, crime. If there were no outward sorrows to distress us, dissatisfaction is seated in our own breasts. We quarrel to-day with what pleased us yesterday; we seek change, diversity, novelty. The consequences of our own follies overtake us, in the ordinary moral government of the Almighty, as they did the prodigal in the parable: whilst more remarkable punishments are sent by him from time to time, to vindicate his violated majesty and recover the sinner to repentance.

But the sincere servants of God, like David—who was probably the author of the Psalm from which the text is taken—have additional trials. They are placed under the paternal discipline of a heavenly Father; they are “chastened for their profit;” they are under training for usefulness here and eternal glory hereafter; their sorrows are more numerous, and have various ingredients in them of which the world and the ungodly are unconscious; they spring from other sources, and are accompanied with other feelings and consequences.

Some arise from their peculiar public duties and relations with others, as we see in king David, Moses, Joshua, king Hezekiah, Paul.

Others spring from more ordinary domestic calamities, like those of Jacob or holy Job; or from the loss of children, or the unkindness of friends; or from depression of heart like Hannah, whom “her adversary vexed, so that she turned away her face and would eat no bread.”

Bodily sicknesses constitute in all ages another large

class of afflictions. One is bidden, like Hezekiah, to "set his house in order." Others are, like the paralytic or Peter's wife's mother, smitten with fearful, sudden sickness and alarm of death. The peculiar severity of attacks of disease in India, with their rapid effects, give a poignancy to our recollections here, to which I need not advert.

"Sufferings for righteousness sake" must not be wholly omitted, though they are now prevented or mitigated as to most of us, by the protection of a Protestant government. Yet some measure of reproach, unkindness, misrepresentation, and calumnies follow every where the sincere Christian, and accomplish the divine declaration, that, "if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution." And in the case of native converts, this opposition is often carried to the extent of serious personal injury.

The temptations of Satan, the great spiritual adversary, are also to be noticed; who, sometimes as "an angel of light," assumes the garb of extraordinary zeal in order to sow false doctrines; at other times, as the seducing and "old serpent," tempts with external objects addressed to the senses, or by prospects of knowledge and ambition spread before the curiosity; or else, "as a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour" by open force, cruelty, and injustice, under the cover of his emissaries and servants.

Connected with these are the afflictions arising from concern for the honour of the gospel; when our own interests are comparatively slight, but the honour of God, the great name of the Almighty, the welfare of souls is at stake.

Spiritual and internal sorrows for our own manifold sins and defects form a large addition to these sources of woe ; sense of indwelling evil, consciousness of negligence and ignorance, fear of God's indignation, inward displeasure against ourselves, conflict with the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

These various classes of trouble are sometimes accumulated upon us, as in the instances of Jacob, Job, Moses, David ; so that we sink "in the depths," and cry out unto the Lord as from the darkness of despair.

At other times, our sorrows are the immediate consequence of some great sin which we have committed against God, when the enemies of religion have occasion given them to blaspheme, and the Lord arises to judgment.

These, then, are the materials of the divine discipline ; and when they continue long, and answers to our prayers seem to be withheld ; when the furnace is heated seven times more than is wont ; when our natural strength and spirits fail, and our ordinary measure of faith and resignation can sustain the burden no longer ; then are we at last compelled to humble ourselves entirely before our God ; our fierce wills are subdued ; our ears are open to instruction, and the Bible begins to unfold its wonderful truths to our view.

Let us consider then,

*II. The instruction from God's word which afflictions are the means of communicating, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes."*

Doubtless David had learned them in a certain man-

ner before. He knew the law of the Lord, and it was "his meditation all the day." But he had not learned it with so much feeling, he had not entered into its spirit so fully, he had not acquired the knowledge of many portions of it so adequately as when by affliction he was prepared for the lesson. He then understood God's statutes in another manner. He made them more constantly "the men of his council." They became his "song in the house of his pilgrimage." So that he could say, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law."

A general principle is here involved. Afflictions are the interpreter of Holy Scripture. God has written a book, and he sends trouble to make men understand it aright. The Holy Spirit, the great interior teacher, makes use of afflictions to prepare men's hearts generally for the class of instructions the Bible conveys; and then to interpret to them the contents of the revelation.

They are the means of preparing men's hearts for studying the Scriptures, in various ways, *by disposing them aright towards the general scope of redemption.* For the Bible is a discovery of stupendous mercy to man; it proposes the infinite love of God in the sacrifice of Christ; it calls men on the footing of this, to repent and turn from all their sins; it sets forth a holy, spiritual, elevated rule of Christian obedience; it demands the sacrifice of the love of the world; it bids us to pray, to keep holy the Sabbath, to love our neighbour as ourselves. And it offers us, for these purposes, the grace of the blessed Spirit. Now, what preparation has a man for all this sort of reading,

when he is in health, prosperity, and carelessness? What can he understand of it? But let sorrows come, and he is presently, by God's grace, induced, disposed, brought to a right position for understanding the main purport of revelation.

Affliction, again, is the means of infusing *that docility and lowliness of heart*, that childlike temper, that spirit of prayer for divine illumination, by which all the subsequent lessons of Christianity are duly learned. "With the lowly is wisdom."

In like manner, *earnestness in the pursuit of the heavenly doctrine* is a fruit which the Holy Spirit teaches us to bear in times of trouble. The soul is then awakened; eternity is brought near; impending death fills the whole view; the glare of the world is extinguished; religion assumes an importance and reality which before was never felt. And now attention—that wonderful exercise of the intellectual powers, to which moral philosophers attribute so much of the impression of truth—is fully roused to the lessons of the Bible; every word is remembered, weighed, meditated upon. The association of ideas are now turned towards the new subject. Instead of every thing being forgotten as soon as heard; instead of the man of the world in his haughtiness giving up the pursuit of salvation almost before it was begun, he is now prepared for "seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

Then *the relative importance of different classes of truth* as they lie in the Bible, is seized at once by the afflicted and aroused heart. The Holy Scriptures are a wonderful revelation, written at sundry times and divers

manners, and conveyed to us in human language; assuming now the form of history and now of prophecy; conveying truth at one time in lives of patriarchs and kings; and at another in the blessed narrative of our Saviour's doctrine; here in Psalms, and there in divine Epistles. Of course, a great deal of the matters of criticism, of history, of chronology, of manners and customs, and of maxims of prudence in the conduct of life, and details of moral precept are connected with the stupendous mysteries of redemption and its vital principles and consequences. All these have their places, and are important in a certain measure, for certain persons, and at certain times. Multitudes however who read the Bible in prosperity and whole-heartedness, never go beyond them; they stop in the mere surface and appendages of truth. They omit those grand features of the way of salvation, which instantly strike the sorrowful and earnest student. Affliction prepares him for the capital points which can alone relieve his conscience and console his heart. Other matters he learns afterwards, if life and opportunity are granted; but what he learns first and prominently, is what affliction has softened his mind to require.

Further, sorrows prepare the heart for *submitting to the divine authority of Holy Scripture* as the inspired record, written under the plenary guidance of the blessed Spirit. Man in a state of ease and of comparative carelessness about salvation, can never read the Bible with that reverence for the words of the living God, and entire prostration of soul before his authoritative will, which the broken-hearted, afflicted student instantly feels. Objections, theories, traditions of men,

the fancies of his own mind pervert the worldly reader. He takes what portion of the Bible he likes, and tacitly rejects the rest. Not so the lowly, distressed Christian. He bows to his Bible as the unerring dictate of the Holy Ghost.

Lastly ; affliction disposes the mind to *the due use of those means which God has vouchsafed for the explication of his Holy Word*—prayer for enlightening grace ; diligent attendance on the public worship of God, where large portions of it are read and explained ; comparison of brief and difficult passages with longer and more obvious ones ; the comments of learned and pious writers ; the use of matters plain and practical at once, whilst he patiently waits for light upon more mysterious ones.

2. But besides this work of affliction, as preparatory to the understanding of God's statutes, there is a work also of interpretation as to the chief matters of revelation themselves.

*The doctrine of repentance for sin*, who fully understands but the contrite in heart, the afflicted, the powerless mourner ? It is "godly sorrow which worketh" the right apprehension and knowledge, as well as the grace itself, of "repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of." Cases do occur where penitence is wrought under other circumstances ; but ordinarily it is affliction, like the prodigal's "famine and husks," which are the means of his "coming to himself," and arising to return to his father. Slight and vague ideas of what is called repentance, which were all that before floated in his mind, are now exchanged

for penetrating conviction of the real meaning of Holy Scripture concerning it.

So with regard to *the great doctrine of the atonement of Christ*, and the justification of the penitent sinner by faith only in his obedience unto death. What a surprising interpreter is affliction; how bright does faith in Christ appear, when it is the only light that shines; how consoling the doctrine of pardon to the dejected mourner, with eternity full in view; how rapidly does the pride of self-righteousness sink, when Christ passes by, as it were, and says, as he did of old to the sick of the palsy, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee!"

Nor is it otherwise as to the great doctrine of *the Comforter of the Church*. Vain is his voice of gentle consolation to the full and satisfied soul; but to the disconsolate, to the orphaned heart, it is the sweetest of sounds. Sorrow interprets the texts concerning comfort. It is the very blessing the heart needs. And so as to the other offices of the Holy Ghost—illumination, strength, guidance, aid in prayer, helps to faith, hope, love. Weak and cast down, the doctrine of the Spirit raises and sustains us.

Next, *the peculiarly compassionate character of our blessed Saviour* escapes very much the notice, as it does the feelings and circumstances, of the stout-hearted and prosperous. But in affliction, the gospel narratives shine out upon the soul. The instances of our Lord's tenderness, of his tears at the grave of Lazarus, of his pity on all the children of grief who applied to him, of his compassion for the widow, the desolate, and the oppressed; of his forbearance towards his enemies, and



his gentleness to his dull disciples; of his prayer for his murderers, his concern for his mother, and his gracious answer to the suit of the penitent thief when on the cross—all these, and other traits of sympathy and condescension, are placed in the best light by surrounding darkness. The pilgrim confesses he never understood the real force of a thousand incidents in the history of our Lord, till his actual troubles fixed his attention on them.

*The narratives, again, of the afflictions of the saints* are never read with a strong feeling of appropriateness, till, like travellers, we have to pass over the same road with them. Then these parts of the Bible are all new; then they describe our case, and stand out in all their suitableness to our state and wants; then the lives of Abel, and Enoch, and Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and Samuel, and the prophets seem written expressly for our learning. Then we contemplate the sorrows of St. Paul, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and in his Epistles, with new eyes.

And what shall I say of affliction being the interpreter of *the promises of Holy Scriptures*? There are more of “the exceeding great and precious promises” of the Bible made to the meek, the sorrowful, those who mourn, the fatherless, the widow, the orphan, the destitute, the broken in heart, the penitent, the lost, than to any other classes of characters. And who understands these promises so adequately as he who is in the circumstances to which they apply, and who is learning them, not for theory, but for his actual consolation and salvation? Was not Abraham

in trouble when he received the gracious assurance, "Fear not, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward?" Was not Joshua, when God declared to him, "I will not leave thee nor forsake thee?"—words which St. Paul applies to all the persecuted and afflicted servants of God. And were not the disciples full of grief, when they were sent out as "sheep in the midst of wolves," with the assurance that "the hairs of their head were all numbered;" and St. Paul, when the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in thy weakness?" All these promises, and a thousand similar ones, are never understood, till the heart is aided by affliction as an interpreter.

Again, *how many preceptive passages of God's statutes* are only opened to the mind, as circumstances demand. What meaning do we attach to the passages concerning "patience having her perfect work;" concerning self-denial, the taking up of the cross, the imitation of Christ in his suffering, silence under God's chastening, resignation when called to the loss of friends, the returning of good for evil, disappointment met without murmuring and death without alarm; and many other precepts of Holy Writ, unless our sorrows shed a meaning and appropriateness on the lessons? The understanding is quickened in its comprehension of them, when occasion calls them up into immediate use.

*Descriptions of the vanity of the world*, of the insufficiency of the creature to make man happy, and of the reality of invisible and eternal things are, also, utterly unintelligible to "men of the world who have

their portion in this life." The Bible says, "the friendship of the world is enmity with God; she that liveth in pleasure, is dead whilst she liveth;" but who learns God's statutes in these respects, but the afflicted and broken in heart?

And how many of *the devotional parts of Scripture* are lost to the careless, superficial reader of the Bible, which shine out in full beauty to those who by affliction have learned to enter into the import of them? How large a portion of the Book of Psalms is a dead letter, till affliction quicken it into life to our actual perceptions.

And who meditates with understanding on "*the more sure word of prophecy*" concerning "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," but he who feels this world to be "a dark place," and "takes heed" to that holy doctrine and expectation, as to the only "light that shines," till "the day dawn and the day-star appear in his heart?"

And wherefore should I advert to the large portions of Scripture which treat of *death, judgment, heaven and hell*, when it is, alas, too obvious, that whilst God speaks to men on these topics "in their prosperity, they will not hear?" Even so early as the days of Job, "God spake once, yea twice, yet man perceived it not," till there came "the messenger, the interpreter" in the season of sorrow. Then man, "chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain," opened his ears to instruction.

In short, afflictions are the high road to heaven; and the doctrines, histories, promises, precepts, devotions, prophecies, warnings relating to that road,

open upon the traveller's mind, as he prosecutes the darker stages of the journey.

*III. And is not all this good, emphatically good, to such a creature as man?*

1. Consider *the immense importance of learning God's statutes*, God's revealed will, the inspired records of his unutterable love to man; the only chart to guide us amidst the rocks and shoals of our passage; the only food of our impoverished souls; the only remedy of all our sorrows; the only instructor in our state as sinners; in the way of redemption, the aids of grace, the rule of duty, the hope of glory. The value of Holy Scripture is so inconceivable, that to learn it at any price is cheap. Men are anxious enough to acquire some knowledge of the laws of their country; some familiarity with history, with the science of medicine, inventions in the arts; and generally with the various wonders of nature. But what are these compared with **THE BOOK OF GOD**, which embraces all that is most essential for man to know as to both worlds, "having promise of the life which now is, and that which is to come."

2. Let us next remember that men are constantly considering many present inconveniences to be good for the sake of future advantage. They say, this is good for a child; this for a youth rising in life; this for a sick person; this is good for one who has lost his way; this is good for a shipwrecked mariner; this for a condemned criminal. The circumstances of each are taken into the account; and men consider that to be good, which is good upon the whole; which prepares

the child for future comfort and usefulness; which guides the youth to riches and prosperity; restores the sick man to health; points out the way to the wanderer; brings the shipwrecked mariner to shore, and procures pardon for the criminal. And is it not much more good for man, as a sinner, to learn God's statutes by means of affliction; to be trained as a child of God; to be raised to spiritual health; to find the path to heaven; to be rescued from the shipwreck and storm of divine indignation, and delivered from the sentence of eternal death?

3. And have not the servants <sup>'</sup>of God *manifestly appeared to need the afflictions* which interpreted God's statutes? Does not the life of David show that any less measure of affliction would have been insufficient to keep him in the knowledge and obedience of God's word? Would it have been good for David, or for Job, or for Hezekiah, or for Manasseh, or for Peter to have gone on in their sins, and to have acquired in prosperity an increasing obduracy of heart, rather than to be brought, as they were, into trouble, and taught the appropriate lessons out of the book of God's statutes?

4. And do not after-events in life often show, and lead the sufferer himself to acknowledge, as to his own case, and in the language of the text itself, the truth before us? Look at David uttering his last words of joyful faith and gratitude, and leaving his last advice to his beloved son Solomon. Look at Jacob dying in the arms of Joseph, and acknowledging, that "God had led him all his life long." Look at Job doubly blessed in his later years. Look at the prodigal re-

turned by the means of the lessons of affliction to his father's house, with the "best robe upon him, and a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet." Look at Peter recording in his epistles the benefit of former troubles; and Paul; and the beloved disciple himself.

And how many cases now occur continually, when on looking back on former scenes of trial and bitter sorrow, we can see the goodness of the Lord therein.

Especially where the first awakening of the soul to the concerns of eternity, as laid down in God's statutes, has been the blessed result of affliction, the penitent most emphatically says, "Trials and disappointments have been good for me; good decisively, prominently, confessedly; because I was thus led to take up my Bible, to read those neglected pages, to learn the nature of repentance and read the invitations to mercy there given; to learn to pray, to learn to forsake the sins which had involved me in such calamities; to learn the mercy and tenderness of Jesus Christ, and to prepare for death by humble faith in his merits. Yes, let it be inscribed on my tomb as my own feeble and unworthy, but sincere testimony, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.'"

5. For, after all, what comparison is there between "these light afflictions which are but for a moment," and that "*far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*," which they are the means of working out for those who learn in this manner God's statutes? What comparison is there between this "chastening for a few days for our profit," inflicted by God upon his children, and the blessings of acceptance, adoption,

grace, eternal life? Take the balance, and place, with the apostle, in the opposing scales present sorrows, and never-ending joys; afflictions in time, bliss in eternity; and then say, "We reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

6. Lastly, add to these considerations, that nothing is permitted to fall upon us, beyond that which *infinite wisdom and mercy see to be indispensably necessary to our ultimate salvation*. It is not merely that spiritual benefit on the whole is brought out somehow or other by affliction; but the calamities are measured, prepared, limited, controlled by a love and tenderness which "knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust;" and by a knowledge and judgment which mark the time and manner of the operation; even as the parent weighs the measure of the chastisement for his child, or the physician the medicines for his patient, or the refiner the heat and duration of the furnace.

This then is God's method. He gives us the Bible, and he sends "every son whom he receiveth," to affliction as an interpreter. Christianity alters the whole character of human calamities; brings in new designs; places them in another light, and makes them subservient to ends never before contemplated.

Then what must be *the beneficial tendency of that religion*, the records of which are so pure and elevated, that it is for the highest good of man that he should learn at any expense their holy lessons; and which, on the other hand, turns all the most painful events of life into sources of ultimate instruction and salvation.

What can Deism, or Heathenism, or Mohammedanism say to the troubles, which, as all men are compelled to allow, constitute so large a division of human history? They have nothing worth learning in their pretended sacred books; and their books never profess to reveal an Almighty Physician who can turn the sorrows of the soul into its most wholesome medicines. In Christianity every thing combines to illustrate its salutary bearings upon the interests of such a creature as man. The actual reluctance of the human heart to spiritual religion corresponds with what the Bible declares on the fact of the fall and corruption of our nature; the mysteries of redemption by the Son and Spirit of God are precisely adapted to his wants, and the afflictions of human life are controlled to the ends of this redemption on man's heart by infinite wisdom. Penitents in all ages, and in multitudes which no man can number, acknowledge, each for himself, with humble gratitude, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes."

How diligently should all who bear the Christian name *love, study, honour the Bible*. God attaches illumination, sanctification, consolation to his own word. He that inspired the book, brings the scholar to learn it in the school of affliction. But unless men love and honour the Bible enough to study its contents, they never can be comforted by it. If indeed they could see the print of Christ's feet, or the wood of his cross, there is nothing they would not do to visit such memorials. Superstition has wearied herself in these tasks. But here in the Bible we have the very form



and impress of the mind of Christ, the history of his incarnation and sacrifice, the divine words which he uttered, the exact doctrine which he delivered; and yet men are negligent and listless. They seldom read the Bible; and never with that reverence and honour which become the words of the Most High.

The Jew and the Mohammedan and the Hindoo put us to shame. They learn all the words of their sacred books; they preserve them with the most zealous care; they read them and commit them to memory with eager delight; they place splendid copies of them in the most precious caskets.

But we think nothing of the Bible: we often travel about without the Bible as our companion. We let days pass without reading any portion of its contents.

Let us then *awake from torpor, especially those of us who are in sorrow*—let us not lose the benefit of our afflictions. Let us see the danger of prosperity, and the happiness of learning God's statutes even by means of trouble. Detect, I pray you, the false glare of the world, and the treacherous designs of Satan. It is the reproach of our nature that prosperity produces ingratitude; that the more God bestows, the sooner we forget him; that the great, the rich, the powerful, the learned, the philosophical, are too often as a body unmindful of the Benefactor from whom all their blessings flow. Men prefer any good, any pleasure, any distraction, to religion and God's statutes—the natural man prefers Pharaoh on a throne, to Joseph in a prison; Korah and Abiram to Moses;

Sennecharib to Hezekiah ; Nebuchadnezzar to Daniel ; Dives to Lazarus ; Demas to Paul ; Barabbas to Christ.

But we entreat you to come to a better mind. We entreat you to use the calamities and depressions of heart you meet with (for God sends afflictions after you, as the storm after Jonah) to the ends for which they are designed. Take up your Bible, as St. Austin did. Read the Psalms, and learn God's statutes ; read the gospels, and learn to believe in the Son of God ; read the epistles, and learn the way of pardon more fully ; read all the Bible, and learn the fall, redemption, sanctification, the rule of life, of prayer, thanksgiving ; the preparations for death and judgment ; the path to life and immortality. Receive Christ now in his word with joyfulness like Zaccheus, sit now at his feet like Mary ; and in the hour of death you shall acknowledge, " I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled."

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## S E R M O N   X V .

JOHN xvii. 15.

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world ; but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

IF we judge of the importance and difficulty of Christian duties by the manner in which they are enjoined, and the frequency of their recurrence, few will appear more arduous than that of “overcoming the world.” No topic, for instance, is more prominent than this, in the last solemn prayer of our Saviour for his disciples. Nine or ten times is the subject there introduced ; and in so peculiarly affecting a manner in the text, that we cannot doubt either of its immediate relation with all the parts of practical Christianity, or of its necessity as a proof of our love to our dying Lord. In fact, The means of preservation from the dangers of the world, which is our present inquiry, involves almost every question connected with that spiritual life by which we are taken out from the habits of a fallen race, and sustained in a new and heavenly spirit and conduct. May we enter upon it with humble prayer to the Holy Ghost for assistance and grace !

I. In considering the first division of our subject, *The dangers of the world*, it is obvious, that as res-

pected the disciples for whom our Lord more immediately offered the prayer of the text, they were of two kinds. Some were peculiar to their situation as apostles about to found a new religion on the faith of their Master's divine mission, and to proclaim his resurrection in the face of enraged multitudes of Jews and Gentiles. They were to go forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves." The "preaching of the cross would be to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The time was about to come "when whosoever killed them, would think that he did God service." With this class of perils we are now less concerned.

The second kind, however, is common to all the servants of God, from one age to another; with circumstances infinitely various, but all agreeing in the main principles and effect. These perils are the same substantially to us, as to the first disciples, or to St. Paul, or St. Peter, or St. John; the same to us as to the prophets and kings and patriarchs of old; as to Noah, and Lot, and Abraham, and Moses, and Samuel, and Jeremiah, and Malachi. We have only to abstract the particular circumstances, and then the instructions, warnings, consolation, doctrine, become our own.

Accordingly, in our baptism we renounce still, every one of us, "the Devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; and when we are signed with the sign of the cross, it is "in token that we should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, but manfully to fight under his banners against the world,

the flesh, and the Devil, and continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto our life's end."

By the term, world, is to be understood in general all the things and persons around us; whatever is subject to the senses; all that is secular, external, tangible; the whole mass of mankind, with the various scenes of the earth which we inhabit, and with which our affections and duties are mixed up.

The term thus stands opposed to the spiritual life, which includes every thing that is interior, unseen, spiritual, eternal; and all our habits, affections, and actions, so far as they are governed by spiritual motives and principles.

To be "of the world," is to belong to the body of mankind as fallen creatures, and to have willing and habitual intercourse with them in their maxims, pursuits, tastes, pleasures, lusts, estimate of good and evil, vain forms of religious service, and merely intellectual and scientific schemes of happiness: whilst, on the other hand, to be "not of the world," is to be in communion with Christ as our spiritual head, and to have fellowship with the whole body of the faithful in all the principles, habits, and feelings of the spiritual life; and to live agreeably thereto.

This distinction proceeds upon the doctrine of the Fall. The world as God created it, was a different thing from what it has now become. Whilst man continued in a state of innocence, there was no danger from the world. It stood not in opposition to the spiritual life, but was its handmaid and helper. Every outward object reminded Adam of his Creator. Every idea he received by the impression of the

senses from without, gave him some better conception of his divine Benefactor. His temporal blessings and duties did not turn away his affections from his God, nor betray him into any undue love of the creature. There was no danger of excess, nor need of caution. His mind was innocent and pure. Every faculty was in its place. It was not possible for man to receive harm from the world, because it was in itself "very good," and he had no seeds of harm in his own composition and temper.

But now man is fallen. He has become fleshly, carnal, sensual. He has lost the spiritual life. He has no real love nor delight in God and spiritual things. The faculties of his soul are in disorder. The appetites are not in obedience to the will and conscience. The understanding, the queen of the soul, is darkened, and has lost her rule over the other powers. The senses are now the inlets to temptation. The persons and things about us are now, through the mischief latent in the heart, a constant snare to us. Earthly things outweigh heavenly. The body is regarded, not the soul; time, not eternity; pleasure, not duty. The seductions and terrors of our fellow creatures exclude the authority and love of God.

The command, therefore, now is, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." The denunciation now is, "The friendship of the world, is enmity with God." The sentence now pronounced is, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The change which Christianity now requires is, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind;" and the

distinction between "the pure and undefiled religion" of the disciple of Christ, and that of a man who "bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart," is, that he "keeps himself unspotted from the world."

The governing principle of the world is termed in Scripture, "the earthly mind;" "the minding of the flesh;" the being "dead in trespasses and sins;" the "fulfilling of the desires of the flesh and of the mind;" the being "sensual, and not having the Spirit;" "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Just as the governing principle of the new and spiritual life, is "the spiritual mind;" the "minding spiritual things;" the "walking with God;" the "living after the Spirit;" "the setting our affections on things above;" the being "dead, and having our life hid with Christ in God." Thus far, I trust, all is clear.

The dangers, then, of the world arise from all those various seductions or terrors which spring from the persons and things around us, in consequence of the hold which they have generally on our fallen nature, and on our particular characters, affections, and duties.

The matter or elements of these seductions and terrors, are in a great part innocent in themselves, and become dangerous or sinful only through our abuse of them. The parent of the family is to "provide for his own house." The master to "give his servant what is just and equal." The servant to "obey his master in all things." All the ranks and orders in Society, from the prince on the throne to the humblest artisan, are to be "diligent in business." Each one is "to occupy with his talent." The pursuits of art and science, the discoveries of philosophy, the con-

templation of the wonders of creation ; jurisprudence, geography, chronology, poetry, history are all innocent in themselves.

1. But here arises the first class of perils to the soul—*Excess in lawful things*. *Perimus in licitis*. When external duties absorb our affections, when they indispose for spiritual meditation, when they exclude the love of God, when they distract the mind in prayer, when they are pushed into the Sabbath or a part of the Sabbath, when they fill the field of vision, and prevent their just weight being given to spiritual and eternal realities, they then become, so far and as to us, unlawful. The men in the days of Noe and of Lot, as well as the guests in the parable of the marriage banquet, are not accused of open crimes ; they were engaged in things of themselves lawful ; they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage ; but in so far as they neglected for these things the calls of religion, they ruined their souls, and provoked the just anger of Almighty God. The degree was unlawful ; the affections absorbed in them were unlawful ; the contempt of God and eternity was unlawful.

2. The next sort of perils is, when *things really criminal are coloured over with false appearances*. “ Let us cast off,” saith the apostle, “ the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light ; let us walk honestly as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.” “ The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these ; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revel-



lings, and such like." Now these positively sinful things are by the seductions of the world presented under other names, such as good fellowship, custom, the aberrations of youth, innocent amusement, free living, the way of the age, the knowledge of mankind, &c. ; and by these deceits the conscience is bribed, the unbending law of God forgotten, and the natural tendency to sensible things accelerated. What loss of time, fortune, temper, and influence thus accrues, I need not say. How many of the books, pictures, companies, spectacles, amusements of the world, are thus detected to be full of immediate incentives to what is sinful, I need not say.

3. A further danger arises from *the prevailing spirit and fashion of the age in which we live*, or the country where our duties plant us, or the circle by which we are surrounded. Our social character and feelings are ever strongly inclined to seek the good opinion of others ; to be like the rest of the world around us ; to follow the stream ; to shun singularity and scorn ; especially as respects religion. In such a country as India, the peril of our souls is in this view extreme. The manners of the Heathen and Mohammedans around us ; their low standard of moral sentiment ; the effeminate tendency of the climate ; the habits of too many Europeans, senior to ourselves, seduce multitudes of young persons to comply with unlawful solicitations. They do not like to stand alone. They do not like contempt. They comply for company's sake, for fashion's sake, for their friend's sake.

4. *Family ties*, again, are often a wide inlet to temptation. Sin entered the world through the affec-

tions of the first man. Adam listened to the suggestions of his wife. The inter-marriages of the "sons of God with the daughters of men" let in that corruption and violence into the age of Noah, which provoked God to send a deluge upon the earth. One of the guests in the parable, having married a wife, prayed to be excused. It is thus, that in every age, through the medium of family connexions, the world rushes in like a tide. Our native converts have especially need to be tenderly watched over by their ministers in this respect.

5. *The terror of open opposition*, also, in one form or another, is an instrument which the world constantly employs for endangering our souls. Those who are covetous and ambitious, like the Pharisees, will not only deride, like them, the doctrine of Christ; but employ reproach, calumny, charges of over strictness, of enthusiasm, of weakness of understanding. These are ready weapons, which are wielded to terrify us from what is good, and force us into evil. The loss of reputation, the loss of worldly interest, impediments to fair advancement in our profession, are a branch of this persecution.

And in the case of converts from Mohammedanism or Idolatry, it is only the protection of Christian governments that can defend from open violence and injury.

6. *Insensible declines in Christian doctrine and practice* are a further plan which the world sedulously acts upon to draw us from God and spiritual things. "Worldliness," says one, "is the standing heresy of the Church;" especially in periods of outward peace.

When the temper of the age has so far diffused itself into the minds of men, as to weaken their estimate of the spiritual life, to alter their judgment, and lead them to represent compliances with the corruptions around them, as expedient or excusable, declines from God soon creep in. The standard of doctrine is lowered. The pulpit is infected. The forms of religion are magnified unduly. Spirituality is lost sight of, perhaps despised. A worldly life is rendered not wholly incompatible with the profession of Christianity, and the peril to the souls of men is extreme.

7. In the midst of all these and other dangers, that which constitutes the main peril, *is the spirit of the world*; just as in the interior life of God, it is the spirit of Christ which is the characteristic of a right state of heart. A thousand statutes, a thousand rules, a thousand suggestions are nothing, if we allow the spirit of the world to supersede the spirit of true Christianity. Whatever becomes the occasion of infusing a worldly temper, is proportionately perilous. There is no end of enumerating particulars in such a case. Some things are lawful to one man, and unlawful to another. Some are safe at one period of life, and unsafe at another. Some may be a duty to one man, and a sin to another. It is not sufficient to say that all practices, maxims, habits which are in themselves, or in their necessary consequences, contrary to the gospel of Christ, are unlawful. It is not sufficient to say that whatever is to us an occasion of imbibing the spirit of the world is dangerous. We must go further, and still watch against this spirit of the world in our most lawful and indispensable employ-

ments. And, even in our religious duties, who is “able to say,” says Bossuet, “in sincerity, with Jesus Christ, I am not of the world? We retire into our closet, the world follows us. We fly into the wilderness, the world follows us. We shut an hundred doors upon us, we fasten an hundred locks, an hundred grates, if you please, an hundred strong walls—the enclosure is impenetrable—the world follows us. We retire into ourselves, we meditate; the world follows us. What shall I do then to escape from the world which follows me, which lives within me, and which has hold of my very entrails? And yet I must be able to say with Jesus Christ, ‘I am not of the world.’ O Jesus, I shall be able to say it, when thou shalt have said for me, ‘I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil;’ that is, shouldest take from them the spirit of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

II. And this leads us to consider the second division of our subject, *The best means of preservation from the dangers of the world.* “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world; but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

An apparent, but false source of safety is here intimated. For it might appear, and does often appear to the Christian, when struggling against the flood and tide of worldly things, that the best relief would be a speedy transition to a state of glory and eternal peace. But no. “I pray not,” saith the gracious and

<sup>1</sup> Bossuet, vol. x.

all-wise Saviour, "that thou shouldest take them out of the world." This is a most affecting expression. It recognizes the natural dictate of our hearts, and condemns it. It meets the objection which our timid minds frame. No; we are not to be transplanted from this scene of trial, immediately on our being best qualified to serve God in it. We are to remain in our stations of duty, to glorify our Saviour, and to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." We have a great work to do, and a great trial to endure. We have to benefit our neighbour; to manifest the force of Christian principles; to show the sincerity of our faith; to be conformed to the example of a suffering Saviour; to ripen for the employments of heaven; to struggle through the combat to the crown. We are thus to know practically what is in our own hearts, and what obligations we owe to divine grace.

This intimation may serve to caution us against all those plausible expedients of escaping the contagion of the world which are inconsistent with our discharge of our several lawful duties in life. To fly at once human society, to desert our posts, to become recluses, monks, hermits; to be misanthropes, severe, sour, gloomy—all this is cowardice, not victory; ill-temper, not spirituality; dejection and flight, not boldness for Christ; selfishness, not love to our neighbour. To remain in our spheres, and overcome the evil of the world connected with them, is one thing; to fly from those spheres of social and domestic duty, is another. Such a principle would have taken away Moses from his post as legislator; Joshua from the headship of the people; Ezra, and Nehemiah, and

Daniel from the courts of the heathen princes, where they were most eminently serving God. It would have banished Joseph from the office of saving Egypt; and David, and Josiah, and Hezekiah, and Asa from filling the throne of Judah. This would have even driven St. Paul from many of the labours of his apostleship.

The question then is, What are the best means of preservation from the evil, whilst we continue to discharge our duties in the world? How may we best guard against excess in lawful things, the false names put on vices, the prevailing fashion of the age, family ties, the terrors of opposition and persecution, insensible declines from God, and a worldly spirit, whilst we are endeavouring to “serve our generation?”

And here we must premise that the power of Almighty God, the intercession of Christ, and the operations of the Holy Spirit, are the only effectual sources of preservation. The prayer of the text is addressed by our Lord to his heavenly Father. It beseeches him to keep the disciples. It is he, the only wise God, that must “keep us from falling, and present us faultless in his presence with exceeding joy.” We are “kept,” saith the apostle Peter, “by the power of God through faith unto salvation; and a childlike reliance on “that glorious power which strengthens us with all might by the Spirit in the inner man” must ever be united with the use of such means as may be suggested.

1. The first is *earnest, fervent, persevering prayer*. This is intimated by the whole bearing of the text. If our blessed Saviour thus prayed for us, it is sufficiently obvious that we should unceasingly pray for ourselves.

The whole spiritual life is sustained by prayer, as the natural by the air we breathe. The mists and fogs of the world will soon obscure our view, if they are not dissipated and our eyes kept awake and watchful by communion with that invisible and spiritual world which is the grand antagonist principle to the present sensible one.

2. *Diligence in our lawful callings* is another means of God's keeping us. This is so far from being to be avoided, that it is to be improved as one chief method of safety. It is not in idleness or vacancy of mind, but in the honest occupations of our lawful calling, that the real evil of the world is to be escaped. Of all the perils to which I have adverted, the far larger number spring, not from our duties in life, but from the pleasures and engagements to which we choose to expose ourselves out of those duties, and often in opposition to them. The idle student, the indolent civil or military servant, the careless pleasure-hunting merchant or trader, the thriftless mother of a family, the unconcerned, trifling wife, the disobedient, heedless son, are the kind of persons who lay open to Satan's seductions. When our worldly business is attended to as it ought to be, and secret duties of devotion are punctually observed, there cannot remain a great deal of time for persons of any station, beyond what their families and households justly claim from them.

3. *The sanctification of the Lord's day*, with a careful use of all the other appointed means of grace and instruction, may next be mentioned. To keep us from the evil of the world, God gives us one day after every six, for spiritual meditation, public worship,

reading Holy Scripture, visiting the sick, family religious instruction, and anticipations of the rest and employments of heaven. He that does not serve God on this day, is sure not to serve him on any of the remaining ones.

4. God keeps us also *by means of afflictions*. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," is a sentence not only prophetic of an event, but full of intimations of the remedial effects flowing from it. God knows when to smite ; when to tear and rend away the creature to which we are too closely attaching ourselves ; when to shiver to atoms the cup of pleasure which we are just putting to our mouths. Afflictions soon turn the objects of sense into wormwood ; soon arouse us when falling asleep on the enchanted ground ; soon wean us, as the infant from the breast, from worldly joys and consolation.

5. *Watchfulness over the first symptoms of distaste for God and spiritual things*, for the cross and prayer, for conflict with the world, and for afflictions is a means of safety. As loss of appetite, distaste for wholesome food, prostration of strength, and restlessness alarm us with respect to our bodily health ; so should similar indications as to our spiritual.

6. *Much retirement*, the habit of retreat, of meditation in secret, of preparation for public duties by previous solitude, of continually bringing the soul into close contact, as it were, with its relations to God, its state, its wants, its dangers, its spiritual interests, is another method by which God preserves us. Moses, Elijah, Daniel, John Baptist, our Lord himself present infallible examples of the necessity of preparing for fulfilling



our duties in the world, by being often and much in holy retirement.

7. The *instances of awful shipwreck of faith* occasioned by love of the world, are, also, of great importance, when duly contemplated, for enabling us to shun the like rocks and quicksands. "Remember Lot's wife," is a warning which should ever be sounding in our ears: "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world," is another. The cases of king Solomon; the rich fool; Dives; the guest in the parable; and even Martha "troubled and careful about many things," are beacons also in their different degrees.

8. The *society and friendship of eminent Christians* may be mentioned, again, as an important means of safety. We are social creatures; our intimate friends must diffuse to us good or evil: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed."

9. *Meditation on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*, especially when preparing to celebrate the mysteries of his love, is, lastly, an indispensable means of preservation from the world. "God forbid," says the apostle, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God."

Two objections shall be briefly refuted in the conclusion of this most important subject; the one is raised chiefly by the young; the other, by the talented and busy, placed in public life.

The young are not satisfied ; *they want to know whether this and that particular amusement*, this and that object of curiosity is lawful ; they quote the opinion or practice of pious and respectable professors of Christianity ; they assign their reasons for indulgence ; they plead their age, the authority of parents, the circumstances of their residence, neighbourhood, duties.

We reply, “ All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” We reply, “ That which is born of the flesh, is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit.” We reply, “ Ye are dead ; and your life is hid with Christ in God.” We reply, “ Beware lest Satan should get an advantage over you ; for we are not ignorant of his devices.”

They object still that all this is too general. We say, then, Whatever is sinful in itself or its necessary consequences ; whatever excites impure associations and trains of thought ; whatever dissipates the solidity and seriousness of the soul ; whatever occupies time or employs money unprofitably ; whatever has the “ appearance of evil ;” whatever causes your neighbour to offend, is to be renounced.

They still object, and wish to come down to doubtful or minute cases, involved in a variety of apparently conflicting questions and duties. We reply, Into these the minister of religion can scarcely ever safely enter ; those things are sometimes indifferent, sometimes dangerous, and sometimes sinful. We cannot tell you therefore what is your individual duty—and if we could, it would be of no avail. The truth is too plain ; you have little heart for spiritual religion.

We object, in our turn, to such objections. We object to the wrong state of mind which they betray. We complain of the decline of soul towards God which could propose them. We object, that they imply that you would fain crave permission to increase the difficulties of your salvation; that you would ask leave to enfeeble a sinking constitution by unwholesome aliment; that you wish to approach the enemy's territories in order to be taken captive; that you strive to serve God and Mammon.

But a different class of objections is advanced, in an age like the present, *by public persons, men of talent, eager popular characters, men who are placed in the breath of fame.* They object to the strict character of our precepts and counsels. They talk of civil and religious freedom, of political claims, of public stations, of legislation, of party principles, sentiments, and duties. To all these matters we have very little to say. If the objections be honest, they will soon answer themselves, on further examination of the Scriptures, and prayer, and communion with God. The public man will not throw off the Christian; all the dangers of our first head will be admitted and guarded against by him; all the means of preservation, in our second, will be sedulously employed. Such an inquirer will, like Moses, and Daniel, and St. Paul, know how to reconcile his civil duties and privileges with the interior and exalted claims of religion and eternity.

But let the objector be on his guard. Christian Doctrine and Christian Morals cannot be changed. Nothing more fatally ruins the soul than what is term-

ed a political spirit. The world cannot assume a more fearful disguise. The association with the ungodly, the recognition of men without religion as our friends, the union with atheists, socinians, and enemies of all religion for the overthrow of ecclesiastical establishments; the pushing of questions of Church government to the extreme of endangering Christianity itself, as well as the form of it which is opposed; the casting the fire-brands of discord, tumult, agitation, and anarchy amongst a Christian population, are just as direct methods and snares of the great Adversary to infuse the worst species of a worldly spirit, as any we have before noticed. Christianity ever teaches "us to pray for kings, and all in authority; that under them we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty—this is the fundamental, permanent, unalterable, holy temper of our Religion.

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## S E R M O N   X V I .

C O L O S S I A N S ii. 8—10.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him.

THE works of God and the works of man differ essentially from each other. The works of God are complete at once, adequate, admitting of no alteration, open to no after-thought nor correction. The works of men, are, like themselves, feeble, imperfect, inadequate, and yielding of necessity to new discoveries as they are made.

This is especially true as to the greatest of all divine works—the Redemption of man. God has given us in the gospel a revelation of it, which is, as we might expect, complete in all its parts, admits of no additions, alterations, or diminutions; but is entirely adequate for the purposes for which it was designed.

Yet man, weak and ignorant as he is, is ever applying to it the rules of human operations; and assuming, that additions and improvements may be made to it, as to the production of a fellow creature. The presumption of man is ever deserting the office of interpretation, and use, and explication, which is the only one

assigned to him, and pushing into the province of original disquisition and judgment on the matter of Revelation itself, which is God's exclusive prerogative.

Against this fatal arrogance, the apostle is guarding the Colossian converts in our text; and, indeed, in the whole chapter from which it is taken. He admonishes them to beware lest any of the false teachers should make a spoil and prey of them by a vain, deceitful philosophy, which was not after Christ, but was merely agreeable to the traditions and speculations of heathen philosophers on the one hand, or to the worldly rudiments of Jewish doctors on the other. For all the ends of a divine revelation were, as he proceeds to tell them, completely and exclusively to be found in the gospel, and needed no superadditions of human wisdom; for in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" and they were "complete in him."

Our subject, then, is, Vain philosophy exposed, when attempting to tamper with the gospel of Christ. In the consideration of which, we must first notice the simple and complete scheme of Christianity as taught by the apostle; and then the manner in which a vain philosophy presumes to meddle with it.

1. The apostle thus describes *The complete scheme of Christianity*: "In Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in him." For in the true religion, you ask, as I have intimated, in a previous discourse for two things; the first, a manifestation of God, a present Deity, an authoritative communication of the object of worship: the second, sufficient means for obtaining pardon of sin, peace of conscience,

an inward principle of holiness, the rule of moral duty, and a hope of everlasting life. You want the first, in opposition to the endless speculations of men concerning the Divine nature: you want the second, in opposition to the impotent inventions and unauthorized ceremonies which they impose. In Christ you have both. You have the Deity fully manifested; and you have a supply of all the instruction and grace which man can need for availing himself of the manifestation. Christ is completely qualified for his mediatorial work by all "the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily;" and his faithful followers are completely supplied with all they want, by their mystical union with him.

For, 1, *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* The apostle probably alludes to the ark of the Covenant, and the visible Shechinah abiding on it, as the symbol of God's immediate presence, of old. This ark, and the glory, and the propitiatory, and the Holy of Holies were but types of Christ. God now dwelleth much more excellently and manifestly in the person of Christ; in whom he remains and abides permanently, not by a visible and material splendor, but in all the fulness of the Divine perfections. So that God residing there as in a temple, exercises all divine attributes, performs all divine works, and communicates all divine blessings to man, through the mysterious union of the divine and human nature in the one person of Christ.

And thus St. John assures us, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; and the Word was made flesh and

dwelt amongst us," tabernacled, abode, resided, "and we beheld his glory," not the Shechinah, a material and visible splendor as of old, but, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." There dwells therefore in Christ, not some portion only of divinity, as the gentiles boast concerning their false gods; nor some gifts only of divine grace and munificence, as in the case of angels and saints; nor some figurative and typical adumbration of his presence, as on the Jewish propitiatory; but the Λόγος himself, the eternal WORD that "was with God and was God;" with all the fulness of divine perfections, with infinite love, infinite knowledge, infinite wisdom, infinite power, infinite holiness, righteousness, goodness, and truth; so that he that "seeth Christ, seeth the Father also." And thus, though "no man hath," nor can, "see God at any time," yet, "the only-begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him;" being indeed, "the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person."

Here, then, Christianity begins. She plants her foot on the incarnation of Deity in the person of Christ. She presents the one living and true God in his only-begotten Son, "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." She presents "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," as the object of divine worship, faith, love, confidence. She presents Christ as θεάνθρωπος God-man; the Word dwelling in the human nature, and the human nature being taken into union, personal, essential, hypostatical union with it.

2. Nor is the *practical end of this Revelation of indwelling Deity* less astonishing than the discovery it-



self: "Ye are complete in him," that is, when you by faith receive him, and are united to him, and incorporated with him, you are in him filled, completed, adequately and fully furnished with all you can need as guilty, sinful creatures for present and eternal salvation.

This is the effect of the divine plenitude of Christ. Having "all the fulness of the Godhead" in him, he causes us to have, so to speak, a plenitude also: we are completed, consummated, and accomplished in him.

We have, indeed, only to look through this single epistle to discover some of the chief points in which this completeness consists.

Such brief expressions as these, for instance, present us with all the blessings of the gospel in a summary manner, as found in Christ—"Christ in you the hope of glory;" "Christ is your life;" "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God;" "Ye are risen with Christ;" "Christ is all and in all;" "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Longer passages in the epistle explain these compendious ones: "Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Well, then, may the apostle say, "ye are completed in him;" for here is the great conversion of the soul of man from the power and dominion of sin and Satan, to the power and communion of the Son

of God and holiness. Here is, also, in this same Saviour, redemption through his blood shed as a sacrifice upon the cross, poured out in the stead of sinners, making atonement for us; the first effect of which is the pardon of the transgressor, the “not imputing his trespasses unto him; and on the contrary, the imputing righteousness without works.” And the whole terminates in our being “made meet” for the heavenly inheritance in glory.

Again—“It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his Cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself—and you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouable in his sight.” Christ, thus, as made man, incarnate, displaying all the perfections of Godhead substantially and personally, is the object of the Father’s good pleasure; he makes peace by the blood of his Cross in the body of his flesh through death. It is in this wonderful transaction that all the parts of Christianity unite. He becomes man, in order that he may make this peace by his own sacrifice and death. In consequence of this, he sends down his Spirit and reconciles and subdues the before alienated hearts of sinners, and brings them to a cordial acceptance of this gift of righteousness, and a sincere obedience to God. And thus at length they are presented in the final judgment unblameable and unreprouable in his sight. So complete are we in Christ in respect of pardon and principles of implanted holiness.

Nor are we less so as regards the rule of duty: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." "Mortify your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry." "Put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." "Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands." "Husbands love your wives and be not bitter against them." "Children, obey your parents in all things." "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." "Servants, obey in all things your masters, not with eye-service as men pleasers, but with singleness of heart." "Masters, give to your servants that which is just and equal." "Walk in wisdom towards them that are without." "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."

Again, if we advert to our deliverance from the yoke of the Mosaical law, and the condemnation involved in it, we shall still find that we are complete in Christ; for he hath "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, that was contrary to us, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

Lastly, when we reflect on the need we have of support in trouble, consolation in sickness and death, and guidance and direction through all the conflict of life, the plenitude of Christ will be found fully adequate to all our necessities. For he "strengthens us

with might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;" and even enables us to "rejoice in our sufferings, as filling up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ."

Here, then, is the simple, but magnificent scheme of Christianity as taught by the apostle; complete in all its parts; coming from the hands of God, like all his other works, full, adequate, perfectly adapted to all the ends of the Divine glory and human necessity. The object of worship, a present Deity, is set before us in Christ. The supply of all man can need, in order to avail himself of the vast discovery, is exhibited in the same divine Saviour. Here is a practical, effective, divine scheme for remedying the consequences of the Fall, which, wherever it is promulgated in sincerity and lowliness of heart, is accompanied with the power of the Holy Ghost to the salvation of men.

From this infinite plenitude of Christ in himself, and our communicated plenitude in him, the apostle accordingly draws the inference and caution of the text against that presumptuous tampering of a vain philosophy which the circumstances of the Colossian converts required. This leads us to consider,

II. *The manner in which this great evil insinuates itself*; "Beware lest any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." There were many deceivers and false apostles amongst the Colossians, who seem to have united the reasonings and sophisms of the Heathen philosophy with the exploded ceremonies of the Jewish law. The heathen

dogmas, as it should appear, were partly Platonic and partly Pythagorean; the former teaching the worship of demons or angels as mediators between God and man; the latter, enjoining such abstinences from particular kinds of meat or drink, as were subversive of the liberty and universal design of the gospel.

These several heathen traditions agreed, also, but too well with the superstitious notions of the Jewish doctors, and assisted in reproducing the worldly and carnal rudiments of the now abolished ceremonial usages.

These two classes of human inventions, then, Philosophic and Jewish—were craftily insinuated into the Colossian Church. Their patrons acknowledged the general truth and authority of Christianity, but represented it as not complete without these additions. “A voluntary humility,” uncommanded by God, and unsuited to the whole genius of the gospel, was thus introduced; the souls of men “were beguiled by enticing words, “and began to intrude into those things which they had not seen, vainly puffed by their fleshly mind.” “The worship of angels” was brought in. “A show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body” flattered the mutable converts. A vain philosophical parade of terms and notions borrowed from heathen sages or Jewish zealots threw a veil over the mischief; and thus, instead of remaining, as they professed, “dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world,” and “holding” firmly by him “the Head,” in whom “they would be complete,” and would “increase with the increase of God;” they followed principles and usages which were “not after Christ,” but learned in a

totally different school; and as the result of the whole, they were in danger of being made a spoil of and driven away from the fold of Christ,<sup>1</sup> as a booty and prey, by these marauders, just as the Amalekites of old, after plundering Ziklag, bore away as their spoil all the men and property of David and his people.

The apostle, therefore, cautions us with becoming warmth against this danger. For it is an insult upon revelation. It charges the gospel with being defective. It seeks additions and supplements to that Saviour in whom all "the fulness of the Godhead bodily" resides, and in whom we are fully completed and consummated.

Against Philosophy itself, or the love of wisdom, you will observe, the apostle by no means objects. He explains in what sense he uses the word, by adding, "vain deceit." Philosophy in itself, and truly so called, is the knowledge of the works of God in his glorious creation and conservation of all things; it is the inquiry after truth; it is the tracing out the wonders of the Almighty's hand in the universe of mind and matter. The Bible is full of the principles of philosophy in this noble and genuine sense. "The heavens declare the glory of God—the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, even his eternal power and Godhead." Revelation proceeds on these primary truths. In all ages since the promulgation of the gospel, the greatest philosophers, the most mighty discoverers, the most acute reasoners have been devout Christians.

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 4, 16—23. See, also, the whole Chapter.

The testimony and tradition of past events, also, so far as they illustrate the inspired writings, are to be duly esteemed. The writings of men handing down the experience and observations of large classes of mankind; explaining matters of history, chronology, geography, laws, manners, habits of thought and conduct, and delivered down from age to age; the inventions continually made in the arts and sciences; the knowledge of languages, and of the sound logical interpretation of them—all these are so far from being to be rejected, that they are to be honoured in their due province. We consult antiquity—we unfold the page of human history—we avail ourselves of all helps to the right understanding of Holy Scripture.

Again, forms of worship, ecclesiastical usages, the testimony of the apostolic age and that immediately following the apostolical, to the manner in which the government of the Church was settled under the direction of inspired men; the good order and arrangement of Christian flocks; the use of liturgies; the connection of Church and State; the doctrine and discipline of the different branches of Christ's holy Catholic Church in all periods, are points of useful information and important example.

But what the apostle protests against, is the intrusion of human pride and folly, under these or the like fair names, into the prerogative of Almighty God. Philosophy must not alter the scheme of the gospel; philosophy must only follow, admire, stand waiting as a handmaid at the porch of revelation. She is not to sit in judgment on matters divinely revealed. She is not to add to, or diminish from the complete and

perfect redemption of him in whom dwelt "the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

The tendency of human corruption is the same in every age. The two classes of error alluded to in the text—Heathen philosophy and conceit; and Jewish superstition and formality—have ever opposed in one form or other, the simple grandeur of the gospel.

We cannot too sedulously guard our native converts against the twofold danger. The same vanity of mind which the apostle describes in his epistle to the Romans, governs still the heathen world, and will harass the young Christian. "They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; PROFESSING THEMSELVES TO BE WISE, they became fools; and as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind." And so in his epistle to the Corinthians; "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the DISPUTER OF THIS WORLD; hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks SEEK AFTER WISDOM; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are saved, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

And with respect to ablutions, marks, ceremonies,



castes, external observances, the native convert must be cautiously guarded against bringing into the Christian Church the burdensome and unauthorized mummeries of the heathen worship.

But in the longest settled Christian communities the caution is important, especially in a day like the present, when the multiplication of the means of education and the cheap diffusion of popular literature exposes the young to especial temptation.

There seems a mighty struggle now carried on by the great Adversary against the completeness of the person and salvation of Christ. The union of a false philosophy with the gross superstitions of the dark ages presents a most formidable obstacle to the simplicity of the gospel. It is indeed portentous to observe that the most presumptuous claims of superstition, will-worship, and voluntary humility in the form of Popery, should seem to combine with the intellectual pride and the figments of a pretended philosophy, to undermine the gospel of the grace of God.

“Beware,” then, my brethren, “lest any man,” of whatever pretensions, “beguile you by enticing words.” Beware lest any one carry you off as a booty from the fold of Christ by a show of human wisdom. You are “complete in Christ.” You have the manifestation of all “the fulness of the Godhead” in the person of our Lord. You have every thing relating to the pardon of sin, the implantation of holiness, the rule of moral duty, support in affliction, and the hope of glory, furnished you in him. Man fell by pride; he is raised in a way of humility. Man sinned by presuming to know and to be what God had for-

bidden ; he obtains salvation by submitting in silent adoration to the complete and adequate scheme of mercy in our incarnate God. Humility, not curiosity ; self-denial, not conceit ; silence, not loquacity ; practical subjection of soul, not intellectual hardihood, are agreeable to the genius of the gospel. The inventions and additions of man, whether on the side of what is termed philosophical investigation, or on that of superstitions and idolatries under a Christian name, are inconsistent with God's plan ; they are "not after Christ ;" they are either the "tradition" and doctrine of the heathen newly decked up, "or the rudiments" of the Jewish economy under another form ; and in each case are a "vain deceit," and contradictory to the completeness of Christ. Many specimens may be given.

The Neologism, as it was termed, of the German School, for some years so rapidly diffused, but now happily checked both here and in the country which gave it birth, was a specimen of this vain philosophy. Miracles, prophecies, doctrines, parables, facts of history, were all mystified and explained away, by a sort of magical process.

2. The gross and ignorant assertions of an uneducated, or rather half-educated infidelity, is another specimen. For unbelief is commonly disowned now by men of education and reflection ; they have been fairly driven out of the field : but men with only a smattering of knowledge, who know nothing of the laws of evidence, nothing of history, nothing of chronology, nothing of the grounds of testimony on which all the most important concerns of life are regulated, and

to whom one assertion is as good as another, are now assuming the name of philosophers ; are denying the first principles of morals, and making a prey of an inquisitive and conceited multitude.

3. The unnatural commixture of temporary party politics with religion, and the union for a time of some religious portions of the public with Infidels, Socinians, and Papists to overthrow those establishments which are amongst the chief safeguards of Christianity in Europe, and to divorce our country from the Christianity which sanctifies and upholds it, is another instance of the vain deceit against which our apostle guards his converts.

4. The common apophthegms, also, that knowledge is power, in the sense of mere intellectual attainments being capable of reforming the world—that opinions are innocent ; that men are not accountable for their belief ; that the morals of Christianity are indeed good, but that her mysteries are of little value ; that the doctrines of the gospel chiefly rest on scholastic refinement ; that a civil and external utility to the greatest number is every thing, are other proofs of the existing danger.

5. The loose and ambiguous language sometimes held as to the merely human or ecclesiastical authority, as it is termed, of the Lord's day ; and on the credibility of the Bible in opposition to its divine inspiration, is of the same class.

6. As are the hazardous and greedy overstatements on every topic on subjects connected with geology ; confessedly hypothetical as much of the theory is, and feeble at present the induction of facts—as if the ge-

nerally received exposition of the Mosaical account of the creation were doubtful.

7. The affectation, also, of a philosophical and abstruse style in describing the mysteries of the gospel; the use of general and tame language; a cold and jejune description of doctrines, which evaporates all their spirit in a mass of words, and phrases, and arguments unintelligible to the poor, and uninfluential upon the conscience; and the dread of the old-fashioned plain language of Holy Scripture;—all savours of the philosophy and vain deceit of the age.

The check to all these evils, the answer to all these encroachments is, “We are complete in Christ.” The scheme of revelation came perfect from the hands of God; its mysteries are equally above your comprehension and our own, but your refinements obscure and dishonour what they cannot illustrate; and what, till we have other faculties, nothing can illustrate. The wisest philosopher can discover nothing more of the nature of God, or of the incarnation of Christ, or of the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily, or of the atonement of his death, or of the manner of the Spirit’s operation on the human heart, or of the secret will of the Most Highest, than the most illiterate. Knowledge on these and like points depends purely and exclusively on the revelation of God himself. We may know what the Bible tells us, and no more. Education, however skilfully conducted, the intellect, however furnished, can give us no help. We are to beware, then, of insulting the wisdom of God by adding to or taking from, or concealing the complete scheme of mercy which he has revealed; and which

alone he will bless to the awakening and saving of souls when his authority is acknowledged and avowed, and human wisdom keeps herself in her important, but subordinate province.

Let this, then, be the one practical conclusion of our subject, that the revelation of mercy must be welcomed and propagated, not only in the truth of its facts, and the dependance on each other of its mysteries and doctrines, and precepts of life, *but in the spirit and temper which it is designed to cherish, and to which it is addressed.* The gospel is for “the humble;” for “those that mourn;” for the meek and the “lowly in heart.” “Except a man receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” Self-conceit, self-righteousness, self-dependance, self-glorying oppose the whole “mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh;” whether under the garb of philosophical or pharisaical tradition. Humility, self-abasement, docility, a spirit of prayer for divine instruction, self-distrust, contrition of heart receive the complete plan of divine mercy with silent gratitude, admiration, obedience. The lower we sink, the higher we rise. The more empty and void we feel in ourselves, the more room, so to speak, will there be for “the fulness of Christ.” The greater fear we have of tampering with God’s scheme, the richer consolations will it pour into our hearts. Even archangels veil their faces before the throne of the Supreme. The assembly of the glorified in heaven, continually cry, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts.” And man is then in the safest position, the position best

becoming him, the position where the gospel designs to place him, when he receives with the greatest simplicity the complete scheme of the mystery of Christ, and applies every part of it, in the diligent use of the correspondent means, and with the largest measure of holy fear, to the ends for which it was revealed.

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## S E R M O N   X V I I .

I T H E S S A L O N I A N S   i v . 13, 14.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep. that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

IF men knew the real happiness which Christianity communicates, they would esteem it more highly than they do. Were there nothing else in it to demonstrate its tendency to promote the highest interest of man, this would suffice, that it relieves him under one thought which he cannot endure, cannot fathom, cannot shun—which he endeavours to throw off from him, but in vain—which haunts him everywhere, and darkens his brightest prospects—and which is the more importunate in proportion to his powers of abstraction and reflection, and his attention to the voice of conscience—THE THOUGHT OF DEATH. What associations doth the very word awaken, both of terror and surprise ! What an antipathy do we feel to dissolution ! What a gloom hangs over the unknown world ! What changes, what separations, what abruptions doth it threaten ! And then its approaches are by such insensible or unnoticed steps ; and there is such un-

certainty, utter uncertainty, as to the time of its last assault ! The consequences also of it—eternal judgment ; the all-seeing Eye ; the scrutiny of the whole past life ; the detection and exposure of all our most secret motives and actions before an assembled world ; a never-ending state of happiness or misery ! It is this THOUGHT which makes man a child of sorrow, and from which Christianity, and Christianity only can relieve him. She has “abolished death,” and “brought life and immortality to light.” She points to the resurrection of Christ and his triumph over the grave, as the means of securing our own. She vanquishes the king of terrors, and “delivers them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

This, then, is our high theme on the present occasion, The thought of death relieved by the resurrection of Christ. And in considering it, let us view the child of sorrow, first, receiving by faith the truth of the fact of her Lord's resurrection ; next, contemplating the prospects opened by it ; and, lastly, reposing in the consolation derived from both.

I. The child of sorrow receives by faith the truth of the fact of her Lord's resurrection : “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again.”

1. These are *the primary facts* of the gospel, that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ; and that he was buried ; and that he rose again the third day according to the Scripture.” This is the foundation of faith.

The wonderful and mysterious death of Christ on the ignominious cross, as a sacrifice for sin, that God



“ might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,” is the first centre truth of revelation.

His resurrection, also, is the great miraculous fact, around which all the other miracles and facts and doctrines of Christianity take their stand. The faith of the Thessalonian converts, to whom the words of the text were addressed, was fixed on this foundation. They believed that Jesus “ died for their sins, and rose again for their justification.” “ They had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come.” They were taught to argue with the apostle, “ Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

2. *These mighty facts they received*, not with a dead, historical, idle assent, which produced no fruits of holiness, and testified no divine change in their own hearts, but with a living, holy, efficacious faith, proceeding from a penitent heart, and implanted there by the Holy Ghost.

They thus obtained pardon of sin, relief from a disturbed conscience, and peace and reconciliation with God. “ Much affliction,” indeed, attended their reception of the gospel, on the part of their persecuting Heathen and Jewish neighbours ; and it was probably on occasion of the deaths of many amongst them by martyrdom, that St. Paul addressed to them the consoling exhortation of the text ; but “ joy in the Holy Ghost” counterbalanced the sorrow ; and “ from them sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Mace-

donia and Achaia, but also in every place their faith to Godward was spread abroad."

So sincere and spiritual was their faith in these facts, that they were thereby united and incorporated into the mystical body of Christ. The expression of the text, "sleeping in Jesus," implies that they were spiritually united to him as the head of his body, the Church; inserted in him; made "members," as it were, "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

3. As an effect of this, they believed also that *death had to them and all true believers lost its sting*; that it was now only like a sleep intervening between the evening shades of this dark life and the morning of the resurrection. This expression, "sleeping in Jesus," is one of the most tender that can be conceived. Death was never described as a sleep in the sense of a natural and short repose, to be succeeded by the morn of a new and glorious day, till the gospel so proclaimed it. The image of sleep, indeed, in the sense of an iron, interminable state of inactivity and silence, had been long known; but that of sleep, as of a child in the arms of a mother-nurse, to be followed by the trump of the blessed resurrection dawn, was first announced in the Christian revelation. Death now is only as a brief repose; the body resting from its labours, and the soul being present with the Lord in holiness and felicity.

4. That their Saviour would *come again in glory at the last day*, was another result of the great fact of the resurrection in which the Thessalonians believed. They knew that "the Son of man would come in his glory and his holy angels with him." They knew

that this “day of the Lord would be as a thief in the night.” They knew that their Lord would thus return “to receive them to himself.”

5. For this was to be a further step in their felicity—*“them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”* This is indeed the most direct conclusion from the fact of the Resurrection, and for the sake of which the argument was adduced—“for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” God would raise their bodies again incorruptible, that they might be produced with Jesus, and presented by him at the last day. Though slain in martyrdom, though dishonoured by rude and cruel injuries, though buried in obscure retreats, or consumed by animals of prey, yet these torments and indignities would neither render their death other than a sleep, nor prevent the resurrection of their bodies at “the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.” “I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

6. *The union of all the faithful*, both of those who will be found living at the coming of the Lord, and those who shall have previously slept in Jesus in various ages of the Church, in one state of glory, will augment the happiness of the entire multitude. “For this we say unto you,” proceeds the apostle, “by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent,” or go before, “them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of

the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." After this all the rest, also, "that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth." "Then we that are alive and remain"—the apostle says, we, including himself, not personally perhaps, but as one who made the cause of the entire Church his own, and annihilated by faith and love petty individual differences—"shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air;" that so the whole company, being changed into the glorious image of their risen Saviour, and approved as heirs of the kingdom, may first be his assessors in judgment, and then, all of them, both those who had previously slept in Jesus, and those who were found alive at his coming, enter the glorious abodes of heaven with him, sharing his triumph, and partaking of final felicity in his presence.

7. "And so shall we *ever be with the Lord*," adds the apostle, as the concluding blessing which the faith of the Thessalonians was to rely on, as the consequence of "Jesus having died and risen again."

The mind labours in following out this succession of glorious events, which will follow on the resurrection of the Lord. But the humble believer looks most assuredly for them all, through that Saviour who shall "change his vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself."

And with these blessings the child of sorrow feels relief under the anticipations of death, under the loss of friends, the disappointments, separations, and sick-

nesses of this mortal life. The thought of Christ's death and resurrection takes off the fearful character of his own dissolution. The thought of pardon, peace, reconciliation; the thought of a brief sleep only after the termination of this life; the thought of Jesus coming again, and bringing with him all them that have slept in him; the thought of all the faithful being united in one company, and entering the glorious abode with him; the thought of being for ever with the Lord—this softens and mollifies the otherwise fearful meditation of death and judgment. The humble foresight of the blessings on the other bank of Jordan makes him forget, like Moses on the mount of Pisgah, the intervening pains and separations, and long to pass over into the good land. Thus the child of sorrow is in the way to abiding consolation under the thought of death.

II. Let us, then, next behold him *by faith contemplating and realizing the prospects* which the facts and blessings thus received, open to his view.

For "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for them that love him."

But who can follow the victorious Christian after death? Who penetrate the veil of Eternity? Who form the slightest adequate conception of his manner of existence, of his glorified body, of his place of abode, his employments, company, felicity? We can only humbly follow the language of inspiration on such a subject. And in doing even this, we must be much

on our guard lest we go beyond the exact authority of Holy Scripture. The passage however which we have been considering, and many similar ones, would lose much of their effect if faith did not muse on the several particulars of them, and if hope and love were not enkindled and elevated by the contemplation.

1. The first part of the heavenly happiness we may safely consider as consisting in *our being for ever with the Lord*. What must it be, brethren, to be with Christ and like him; to “see him as he is;” to view him “in the midst of the throne, as it were a lamb that had been slain;” to behold “the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.” What a prospect that of beholding him, no longer as “through a glass darkly,” but “face to face;” of seeing that very human form which he assumed for us; which endured the agonies of the garden and the torments of the cross; and with which he rose again from the dead. Even on earth some rays of his glory, “the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” have filled our souls with joy, and extinguished the fear of death; what consolation, then, must the unclouded brightness of that Sun of righteousness diffuse around the glorified spirit. And to be for ever with this Lord of our affections; to be always near him; to be ever in his society and love; to have no dread any more of grieving him, of being separated from him, of losing his presence throughout eternity—all this is a ravishing prospect indeed.

2. But we are at liberty to meditate also on *the freedom from the various pains and sorrows of our mortal state* which heaven will bring with it. The

Scriptures very much abound in negatives in their description of its felicity. "There shall be no temple therein; nor shall the city have need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it;" "the gates shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there;" "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie;" "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;" there shall be no curse there, neither death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." What a prospect is this. What a deliverance from our spiritual enemies, and from sin, the greatest of all foes; from defects, omissions, negligences and ignorances in our service of God; from darkness, confusion, and sorrow; from personal and family afflictions, separations and griefs; from toil, labour, and trouble; from temptations and snares; from weakness and sickness; from error and misapprehension; from dejection of natural spirits, and decays of faith, hope, and love. What a consolation is the very thought of that assurance, which is the most tender of all, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes"—as if the saints might have to weep all the way to heaven, and come up with tears even to its very gates, but then would have them for ever removed by the hand of their heavenly Father himself.

3. *The positive felicity and holiness of the heavenly world*, however, so far as we can gather any light from Scripture, must not be omitted in these contemplations. Not only shall we be for ever with the Lord, and all evil be removed; but all good will be conferred,

all that the words "salvation," "glory," the "kingdom," "crown," "joy of the Lord," impart; all that the immortal soul and wonderful body of man were designed for; all that his capacities of happiness, little less than angelic, can receive; all the felicity which his glorified body and soul, in the possession of perfect holiness, can apprehend; all that is contained in the inconceivable gift of the immediate vision, presence, favour, and joy of God, the source of all felicity—man, in a word, come now to his end and consummation, and receiving all those species of happiness, and in the highest measure, of which Adam before the fall was susceptible, and which the mighty grace of Christ's death and resurrection was designed to restore.

4. We may perhaps be permitted to add, that *the noble powers of the glorified saint will be ever advancing* in measures of knowledge, love, and happiness throughout eternity. It seems to be the law of our moral being that knowledge should grow with observation, experience, opportunities of comparison and reflection; that love should be enkindled more and more by intimate communion with its object, and as new materials are accumulated by the advancing operations of the understanding. As therefore there are, in the first instance, degrees of heavenly glory and felicity in proportion to our attainments upon earth, it may not be impossible that there may be a continual progress afterwards; that the same law of our moral nature may remain; and the endless lapse of ages add to our capacities of increased knowledge, love, and felicity. Just as it is not impossible that the



disordered passions, the unsatisfied appetites, the rebellious affections, the malignity, envy, mutual reproach, torment of conscience, agonized remembrance of lost opportunities of salvation—in the word, “the worm that never dies and the fire that never is quenched”—may, from the constitution of the human mind, be augmenting, through eternity, the sense of misery in the lost.

But this may be, or may not be; extreme caution is required on such topics. I allude to it therefore with great reserve.

5. We are speaking perhaps with a higher probability, when we refer to *the joy of reunion in the heavenly state* with those whom we have known and loved upon earth; yea with all the “assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven.” It is evident that *Lazarus and Dives* are described by our Lord as personally known to each other, as well as to Abraham, in the future world. The kingdom of heaven is, also, depicted as a banquet, where we sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; whom it seems probable we shall therefore know. St. Paul calls his converts “his joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.” And our Lord sets forth, by two parables, “the joy which is in heaven over one sinner that repenteth;” and in another, the affecting circumstance of the “friends whom we have made of the mammon of unrighteousness, receiving us into everlasting habitations.” David in the Old Testament mentions it as a point then familiarly known, that he should rejoin his lost child after death.

These and similar passages, connected with the ge-

neral descriptions of the heavenly state, as removing every imperfection and enlarging all the capacities and sources of knowledge and happiness, leave little doubt as to the delightful prospect of the recognition of each other, to a certain extent, in that blessed world. Oh, the joy of reunion with the wife of our bosom, long gone before; with the children whose conversion was granted to our prayers; with the friends with whom we walked to the house of God in company! Oh, the joy of reunion between the pastor and his flock, the master and his scholars, the guardian and his pupils! Oh, the blessedness of meeting and knowing all the saints of all ages, if that should also be granted us—Adam, the father of our race; Abel, the first martyr; Abraham, the father of the Faithful; Samuel, the prophet; David and Hezekiah, the kings of Israel; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Nehemiah and Malachi; Paul, and Peter, and John; as well as the martyrs and confessors of the primitive ages, and the fathers and reformers of subsequent times in the Christian Church; all those, in short, whose names we have loved, whose histories we have perused, by whose writings we have been edified. If “the communion of saints” be an article of our creed, and a source of edification and comfort upon earth, how exalted will be the more pure and enlarged communion with them in heaven!

6. For we shall then be invested, all of us, of every age and dispensation, *with glorious, spiritual, incorruptible bodies*. Here we are safe in speaking of our prospects. These frail tenements, the hindrances of the soul, the dark fleshly prison, the chief strong-hold

of Satan, sin, and the world, shall be left in the grave ; and we shall be “ clothed upon with our house which is from heaven ; ” “ our vile body will be changed like unto our Lord’s glorious body.” Then all our members will be aids to the soul. There will be no weariness in the service of God, no mist obscuring our gaze of divine objects, no weakness to impede our perpetual songs ; but whenever the spirit prompts, the body will cheerfully and adequately follow and obey.

7. It is not improbable, also, that *many of the mysteries of the divine wisdom*, both generally in the scheme of redemption, and particularly in the events of our several lives on earth, may be unfolded. We shall still be finite creatures. But much may, perhaps, be developed to us in that brighter world, which was here too little understood by our contracted understandings and selfish hearts. Afflictions may then be seen as the way to the blessed state of glory, with other degrees of clearness than we can now reach. The bitterest trials, the most dejecting disappointments, sorrows overwhelming as the ocean, separations, bereavements, deaths, which appeared at the time as proofs that God had forgotten us ; all may assume a new position and bearing, on being beheld in their connection and result from one elevated and illumined point of view. What a burst of wonder will break upon the redeemed and happy soul, when the love and wisdom and power and grace of God in our salvation, are seen to have been the sole causes of our “ light afflictions,” heavy as they appeared at the time, but which were “ but for a moment.” How far this light may extend also over the general ways of the

Almighty, and cast its glory on the mysteries of the present mixed state of things, and the scheme of redemption which was designed to remedy them, it would be presumptuous to conjecture. But, the joy of contemplating the storm, after we have arrived at the place of safety; the joy of looking back on the voyage, when we have reached the port; the joy of tracing out wisdom and love, where we once thought there was little but wrath and displeasure, may not improbably form an element of the heavenly felicity.

8. In like manner, the consideration of *that most abundant reward of grace* which we shall then have attained; the “rest from labour, our works following us;” the joy of the Lord opened to the good and faithful servant; the two and five and ten talents recompensed with proportionate dignity and happiness; the visits to prison, the food and clothing dispensed to the hungry and naked, the cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, all recorded in the face of the assembled universe, and recognized as done unto the Lord himself; “they that were wise, also, then shining forth with the brightness of the firmament, and they that turned many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever;”—these scriptural statements of the reward of grace vouchsafed to the faithful, may in all probability enter into the mass of our heavenly recollections and felicity; and may enhance that hymn of praise which we certainly know to be there continually sung, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!”

9. This remark may be extended. For what must the happiness be of *spending an eternity of gratitude*. On earth, nothing more delightful than grateful emotions to a benefactor. On earth, no branch of religious duty more elevating than to dwell on the goodness and mercy of our God; and to inquire, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits bestowed upon me?" Heaven may well be all felicity, partly because it will be all gratitude. A heart ever swelling with a sense of past benefits and ever receiving fresh ones; a mind engaging, without the slightest remains of error, misjudgment, or selfishness, in perpetual adoration and praise for the greatest of all blessings, to the best and most glorious of all Beings, in the purest and most exalted of all places, and with powers of attention, love, praise, never capable of weariness, of satiety as to body or mind, may well be considered as a source of unutterable blessing.

10. I only venture to add, that to be *in the vast assembly of all that is pure and holy in the creation of God*, where each one loves the rest, and knows that he is loved in return with equal fervour; where the intercommunity of affection is perfect and uninterrupted, and no longer liable to decay, must constitute a source of felicity of which the faint adumbrations in the mutual love of Christians to each other in some favoured moments upon earth, can give no adequate conception.

But I check myself. Suffice it to say, that the unbounded prospect which faith contemplates, stretches beyond its most eager view. The death and resurrection of our Lord, which begin to relieve the child of sorrow under the thought of death by simple faith in

the facts themselves, and the blessings consequent upon them, acquire a further efficacy as these opening prospects are gradually realized in a vigorous and spiritual manner by the same holy principle.

But it is time to exhort you, brethren,

III. *To repose upon the consolation* thus administered, during the intervening periods of darkness and affliction.

1. "*Be not ignorant*," then, ye who are children of sorrow, concerning them that sleep; for ignorance stops the tide of comfort. If you know not the real state of things, immediate grief may overwhelm you. The Apostle proposes therefore as the first means of adequate consolation, knowledge, a well informed faith, an understanding enlightened and directed aright on the facts of the redemption of Christ, on the new and softened character given to death, and the future advent of our triumphant Lord, to receive us to himself. I would not, therefore, have you to be ignorant, brethren, either by the hurry and turbulence of grief, or the lapse of time, or the failure of accurate recollection, of those truths. It is our office, as ministers, to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." "The priest's lips are to keep knowledge;" and his "tongue to be learned, to speak a word in season to them that are weary."

2. The second step to full consolation, is to *check that sorrow which would be inconsistent with our faith*, and would place us on the same level, as it were, with the ungodly and unbelieving—"That ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." For, have we not

“hope towards God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead?” Have we not “a good hope through grace?” Are we not “begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away?” Are we not “saved by hope?” And shall we sorrow with the rebellion of mind, with the murmuring, with the obstinacy and dejection, with the excessive and unmitigated grief, which others do, who are “without hope and without God in the world?”

We may sorrow indeed. Christianity is as tender in its sympathies, as it is holy in its tendency, and magnificent in its discoveries. Those feelings can never be wrong in themselves, through the medium of which God works all the beneficial effects of affliction. We are to “weep with them that weep.” Twice did the holy Jesus weep—at the grave of Lazarus, and on the view of Jerusalem given up of God for her sins. But grief must not be indulged to excess, any more than any other passion of the human mind. Inconsolable and despairing sorrow, is admired indeed by the world; but it is rebellion, ingratitude, unbelief. Submission to God’s will, a consideration of our remaining mercies, and a hope founded on the prospects of the heavenly felicity which are opened to those that believe in Jesus, and realized by all who sleep in him, should check our sorrow, that it flow not out into the boundless grief of those who have no hope.

3. And when sorrow once begins to yield to faith, abundant comfort is not far from us. For a third means of consolation is pointed out by the apostle, *communion with the faithful on the subject of the divine promises* ;

“wherefore comfort one another with these words.” Knowledge and a check thrown upon immoderate and hopeless sorrow, will bring us into a state capable of positive comfort; which is never so likely to be vouchsafed, as when we commune with our brethren on the words of this and similar passages of Scripture, and suggest to each other, in Christian conference, the topics arising so copiously from them for our mutual relief.

We may, and should, comfort one another thus with the words of the text, and of other parts of Scripture, concerning our Lord’s meritorious death and glorious resurrection; the blessedness of sleeping in Jesus; the return of our Lord with all the departed at the last day; whilst those who remain and are alive are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so are they all, without distinction, for ever with the Lord.

We may, and should, comfort one another with the bright prospects which faith contemplates and realizes in our seeing and being with Christ; in a freedom from all evil and defect; in our positive felicity of every kind, possibly augmenting throughout eternity; in the joy of reunion with all whom we have loved upon earth; in the probability of many of the mysteries of our present state being developed to us; in our resting from our labours, and our works following us; in the spending an eternity of gratitude, praise, and love.

We may, and should, comfort one another with these words, and submit with resignation to God’s sovereign will; wait our short remaining term of trial; turn to those active duties for which our social nature and the



grace of Christ prepare us ; look on our departed friends as not lost, but gone on a little before on the road where we are travelling ; bless God that they were spared to us for so long a time ; imitate their holy example ; dwell with thankfulness on their having run the race, finished their course, kept the faith, and received the crown ; remember our own momentary tenure of life ; and gird up the loins of our minds in “ following those who through faith and patience have inherited the promises.”

Thus the child of sorrow is gradually relieved under the thought of death ; thus he learns to look forward to it, yea beyond and over it, to the glorious prospects on the other side the grave ; thus he is enabled perhaps to say at length, with holy triumph, “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I will not insult this audience by contrasting the sources of consolation thus derived from the pure, spiritual, exalted fruition of the eternal Author of life, in His own immediate presence in heaven, and all derived from the incarnation, sufferings, atonement, and resurrection of his only-begotten Son, with the sensual and degrading Paradise of the false Prophet, or with the misty abstractions and transmigrations of the Hindoo mythologies—which neither relieve the child of sorrow under the terrors of death, nor present any one object of joy suited to a reasonable and responsible creature. In no one point of view does the truth and glory of

Christianity stand out in bolder contrast with the impurity and darkness of Heathen and Mohammedan imposture, than in the spirituality and purity of its ultimate rewards. This arises directly from those just conceptions of the character of the one living and true God which the Christian Revelation, as we have repeatedly noticed, conveys. All is consistent. The glory of Deity, the justice of his moral government, the great atonement made for sin, the sanctifying grace of his Spirit, the holy nature of faith, the Christian's walk, hope, reward, ultimate joy—all constitute one vast scheme most worthy of God, and most suitable to all the capacities and wants of man.

I observe, in conclusion, that all the evils themselves which Christianity thus meets and relieves—all the evils involved in the thought of sickness, affliction, calamity, separation, disappointment, death, final judgment, eternity; all the evils, in a word, that render man a child of sorrow—are no part of Christianity. Christianity did not produce, she found them only. They press as much upon Natural as upon Revealed religion. Whether man receives Christianity or not, these evils remain the same, nor can he escape them. He must put off his very nature, he must sink himself into the brute, he must deny the being of a God, before he can throw off the terrors of death, the anticipations of eternity, the dread of pain, sickness, dissolution.

The slightest evidence, therefore in favour of a remedial revelation like Christianity, should dispose him to receive it with candour, considering that it is the only message of comfort in this dark world.

When therefore she presents to him the accumulated testimonies of every kind which have been augmenting for two thousand years, what must be the folly, the guilt, the infatuation of man, to remain without hope, to stand aloof from help, to despise his only remedy, to insult by unbelief the majesty of heaven, to choose death.

## S E R M O N XVIII.

## I CORINTHIANS xv. 1, 2.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand. By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

WE remember what we love. The wonderful faculty of memory is strengthened or enfeebled by education, degrees of knowledge, habits of life, general pursuits, and all the variety of circumstances and events which affect our intellectual and moral being.

One great end of the ministry of the gospel is to recall to our minds the truths of Christianity, and preserve or renew that impression of them upon the conscience and heart, upon which our salvation, under God's mercy, depends. For if we firmly retain in our memory and feelings, as St. Paul teaches us in the text, what we have heard, and act practically upon it, we shall be saved. But if we let go the truths of the gospel, and allow them to escape from us, we shall be found to have "believed in vain;" our religion will turn out to have been "a delusion, we shall still be found at the hour of death in our sins."

Let us then consider the subject of Memory, as it respects the retaining faithfully the truths of the gospel; what we may be perhaps allowed to term, **RELIGIOUS MEMORY**; with regard to the truths which are chiefly to be kept in mind; the difficulties of doing so; and the best means of strengthening the memory for duty.

I. *The gospel in its primary elements*, is that which the apostle is treating of in the text and the succeeding verses: "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you.....for I delivered, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again according to the Scriptures." The death of Christ as a sacrifice for it; his burial; his resurrection on the third day for our justification, in accomplishment of the Scriptures of Moses and the Prophets, and received by a lively faith as the foundation of our hope of pardon and reconciliation, and the motive of our steadfast obedience; these are the simplest rudiments of Christianity.

1. These the apostle had *delivered and preached* to the Corinthians with all fidelity, exactly as he had received them by immediate revelation, or from inspired persons, the witnesses of the events. The truths, then, which the memory must retain, are the main branches of divine revelation as contained in Holy Scripture, and delivered and preached to us by the ministers of Christ, exactly as they lie in that inspired Record, and without human addition, subtraction, or alteration.

2. These first elements are, however, connected with *the one great scheme of Redemption* which runs through the whole of the Bible, and was developed with increasing details and brightening light, as the birth of Messiah approached ; till it at last stood forth in its full radiance in the epistles of St. Paul and the other apostles, endued with the Holy Ghost at the day of Pentecost. This sublime plan, extending from the creation of man to the final consummation of the Mediatorial kingdom, it is the duty of ministers to unfold. The chief parts are, man's original righteousness ; his fall ; his corruption and impotency to spiritual good ; the guilt and responsibility of his sinful nature ; the deity, incarnation, atonement, and righteousness of the only-begotten Son of God ; the operations and grace of the Holy Ghost ; and the authoritative and spiritual rule of Christian conduct, consisting of the law of God as expounded and applied in the New Testament, and embodied in the life of Christ.

3. But this scheme must be preached as *the nourishment of a new principle of grace in the soul of man* ; or rather as the source first, and then the nourishment of it. The doctrines of the gospel and its precepts are not to be theoretically entertained merely. Religion in the heart of man must be a heavenly thing. His ignorant and alienated affections, will and conscience must be quickened to spiritual life and perception by the Holy Ghost. The sinner must be renewed in the spirit of his mind ; born again ; born of God ; made a new creature in Christ Jesus. The doctrines of redemption are the nourishment of "this new-born babe" of the spiritual world. They are

the guide of its hopes, fears, joys, consolations, as springing from the primary facts of the death and resurrection of Christ, and the promises of God made therein. The precepts are the direction of the internal feelings and outward conduct, springing from the same divine principle. The Revelation of the Bible is designed to bring man back to that life of God in the soul, in which Adam was created.

4. But *the afflictions and sorrows connected with this course of spiritual feeling and conduct*, must ever be borne in mind by those who would deliver what they have received from Holy Scripture. The great spiritual adversary, as "the God of this world," either goes about as the "roaring lion" of open persecution, or seduces as the wily old serpent by this world's pagantry and lusts, or, "transformed into an angel of light," infuses deadly error into the instruction of some, who have assumed to themselves in all ages, as amongst the Corinthians, the appearance of "ministers of righteousness." Reproaches, calumnies, opposition, unkindnesses; and, if circumstances allow, bitter ridicule, oppression, banishment, loss of goods, and even of life itself, are the uniform effects of the profession of Christ's religion in its humility and spirituality amidst a crowd of idolaters, rebels, intellectual triflers, philosophers, proud Pharisees, disputers of this world, and unbelievers or misbelievers. The cross must be daily taken up, that we may really follow Christ.

5. The filling up the outline of main truths, *with all the statements of Scripture, both primary and secondary, respecting them*, is a further principle to be preached as we have received it. This can never be

perfectly accomplished; but approaches may be made to it. A few propositions, such as the summaries of creeds and articles, are of excellent use; but if we stop in them, instead of continually filling up the outline with the details which the Holy Ghost has thought it right to reveal, and to reveal that we may receive and act upon them, our Christianity will be very different from that of the New Testament as the consequent and supplement of the Old. A Christianity fixed firmly on its primary elements, impregnated with the idea of the vast scheme of redemption, turning all into the food of a divine life in the soul, and prepared boldly to sustain the brunt of sorrow and persecution, must be continually receiving accessions from all the testimony of God in every part of the inspired Volume, in order to be truly and richly scriptural. All the secondary truths of the two Testaments must be worked into them; all the histories, all the maxims of common prudence, all the prophetic parts, all those that relate to Church government and discipline, and subjection to spiritual pastors and masters—every sentence indited by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

6. *Continual growth and advance in grace*, even as the babe gradually rises up to the child, the youth, the man, the father, is, also, a grand branch of religion as laid down in the Bible, and therefore to be delivered out to the people. The capital thing in true religion is to be going on, to be improving, to be making advances in the knowledge, faith, love, experience of religion. In order to this, humility, self-distrust, meekness under reproof, examination of the heart, prayer, are essential branches of the Christian character.



7. Lastly, *the ascription of every thing good in us to the undeserred grace and mercy of God*, is one of the characteristic features of practical Christianity, which must be handed down with all the other parts of revelation, by the faithful steward of the mysteries of God. We must say, with the apostle, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." "I thank Christ Jesus my Lord, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "To him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory for ever and ever." "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

These, and such like main truths of Christianity you have heard, brethren, and received, as we trust, with penitent and obedient minds. The point of conjunction between this revelation and your hearts, as in the case of the Corinthian converts, has been your faith. Here has been the practical union between the truths and facts of the gospel, and your individual state and opinions. All this is well. You have "received" what has been delivered to you, "and therein ye stand." And if you continue firmly to retain in your memory and hearts these blessed instructions, and to act upon them, you will daily

advance nearer and nearer to final victory, and ultimate and complete salvation.

But the evil of the world and the arts of Satan present many, many difficulties to the continual remembrance of divine truth. As the Galatians had forgotten too much the great article of justification, by mingling with it the works of the Law; and as the Colossians were exposed to the letting slip their faith through philosophy and vain deceit, so the Corinthians were also in danger of "making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," by the inventions of Sadducean infidelity or Gentile fable, on the subject of the resurrection of the dead.

Let us proceed then to consider,

*II. Some of the difficulties of duly keeping in memory the main truths of Revelation.*

1. For the faculty itself, like every other in our fallen state, is enfeebled, especially as to any thing that contradicts the appetites and passions. It lets the unwelcome truths entrusted to it slip through, as a leaky vessel.

2. *The strong tide and current of the world* flows directly in opposition to the tendency of the truths we have been considering. The principles of Christianity are soon forgotten; they escape from us; they pass slightly over the surface of the affections; they do not sink deeply and permanently into the memory and heart; there is no affinity, no natural bias of the will and affections to aid them. The current of the world flows full and strong against these slight barriers. Unless there be a constant struggle and effort on our

part, we are insensibly carried down the stream, and find ourselves upon inquiry at an immense distance from the point where we imagined ourselves to be firmly fixed.

3. The difficulty is augmented by *winds of doctrine and the cunning craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*. It was thus, as I have mentioned, with the Corinthians as to the great doctrine of the resurrection. The particulars of St. Paul's inspired preaching on that topic had faded from their memory; new impressions had been made by the glittering eloquence of the false teachers; the corrupt propensities of fallen man had agreed but too well with their seductions; metaphysical subtilties had been made the occasion of objections as to the manner of the dead being raised, their order, and the bodies with which they should appear. They thus relaxed much from their former steadfastness, immoveableness, and abundant labours in the work of the Lord.

It is surprising how soon the impression of the most capital articles of faith fades from the memory of the age, when some sweeping error, or heresy, becomes fashionable and is decked up in meretricious ornaments to appear like truth. The Gnostic heresies of the first centuries, the Arian of the third and following, the Pelagian in the time of Augustine; that concerning the use of images and the worship of saints and angels in the dark ages that succeeded, drove from the minds of the immense majority of men, the memory of the mighty doctrines of salvation.

4. *Distance from the public means of grace*; the rarity of those means—as is too frequently the case

in India; impediments as respects climate and health; prevalent habits of indifference in those about us; the frequent breaking up of our plans by removals; the want of religious society and a standard of excellence around us; the vices and impurities of a vast Heathen and Mohammedan population; unfavourable marriages; the sceptical and semi-infidel language of a scornful age holding up to ridicule the peculiarities of the Christian scheme of redemption, augment in many instances the number of our difficulties. The foundations of truth are shaken, the cement and compactness of it are relaxed, the memory first lets go one particular and then another; the imperfect knowledge we had of the gospel is gradually weakened and effaced, and we lose all the practical principles once drawn from it.

5. *The mere lapse of time, and the little use* to which we have put our knowledge, together with a familiarity with scriptural terms, disconnected very much from the ideas and affections they once awakened, betray the memory too often. Men become insensible to sermons, advice, warning. The terms of Christianity are familiar even to contempt. All doctrine is admitted. Nothing is opposed, nothing resisted—but then nothing is remembered, nothing felt, nothing acted upon. Like the ground on the way-side, all is so trodden under foot of men, that the seed cast on it remains upon the surface for the birds to bear it away.

6. *Religious emotions and joys*, with sudden resolutions and projects, if not balanced by a due knowledge of the bearings of practical Christianity, and

controlled by humility and meekness, soon expose the convert to a forgetfulness of what he has so hastily and superficially caught at, rather than learned. He rushes into religion; and he rushes out again. The heart has been unrenewed, the habits unchanged, the memory not richly and solidly stored with truth. Temptation and persecution arise. He has no root, and withers away.

7. *The excessive burden of worldly business and cares*, however lawful in themselves, and however important or even sacred the station we fill, unavoidably presses into a narrower space our religious thoughts, and ultimately expels them from the memory. No man can think of two things at the same moment. Our worldly business is then only pursued in a suitable manner, when it leaves us time for prayer, leaves us time for Christian friendship, leaves us time for meditation, leaves us time for preparing for the Sabbath, and celebrating its duties with unoccupied minds. But when "the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things" grow luxuriant around the tender plant of religious memory and feeling, they choke and overshadow it, and it becomes unfruitful.

Some good affections may for a time remain, some good habits survive, some amiable dispositions be exercised, some general approbation of the gospel be retained, some friendship with religious and devout persons be cultivated; but these will be the effect of custom, not love; of regard for reputation, not principle. The memory of the mighty truths of the gospel is gone. The Saviour is a stranger to the

soul; the Holy Spirit is departed. The man sinks into mere nature, the world, philosophy, poetry, the arts, earthly pursuits. He has "believed in vain."

Let us then proceed to consider,

*III. The best means of fortifying the memory to retain religious truths.*

The improvement of the mind is more remarkable in the case of memory than in any of the other faculties.

1. *Attention in the reception of the truths of the gospel* may be first noticed. It is according to the measure of original impression, of the voluntary act of the mind in bending its attention to Christianity, that the memory becomes susceptible, retentive, ready. In the conversion of Lydia, the circumstance of "the Lord opening her heart, so that she attended to the things spoken of Paul," is deserving of particular notice. Till you gain a child's attention to the lesson you are unfolding, what effect can you expect? "The forgetful hearer, is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass, for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was;" but the practical hearer, not only "looketh into the perfect law of liberty" as the mirror of truth, but continueth therein, "with a requisite attention and interest of mind; and "this man," and this only, is "blessed in his deed."

2. *To review occasionally the arguments in favour of Christianity*, and especially of the primary facts of the resurrection of Christ, and the promulgation of his gospel by the simple and unaided apostles, will strengthen the memory as to Christianity. This is St.

Paul's method in the chapter before us. He states the main arguments for the resurrection of Christ; answers objections, and proves its inseparable connection with our own. Thus he lays the foundation of rational conviction. What is well learnt in its principles, is not soon forgotten. It is laid up safely in the store-house of the memory. But what is only confusedly received, is easily lost. In a day like the present, especially in a Heathen land such as India, young people should be furnished with the chief grounds of satisfactory proof on which the truth of revelation rests. Then when temptations rush in and religious feelings and susceptibilities are enfeebled, the mind has something to fall back upon; the main points of the gospel are not swept at once from the recollection; and truth has again time to resume its sanctifying sway.

3. *Daily use of the great doctrines and precepts of Christianity* is another means of fortifying the memory. Idle knowledge is soon forgotten; but knowledge brought daily into practice, and the business of our hearts and lives, is necessarily retained. A man may forget some early learning after the lapse of half a life, if he has little occasion of recalling it; but who loses his knowledge of his art, his profession, his main object? What physician, what merchant, what soldier, what advocate, forgets the implements of his constant duties and the means of his continually increasing success? He that "lives by the faith of the Son of God" is not likely to forget any of the main particulars of the great vast Redemption; and he that uses all his knowledge of the Christian rule of life daily, will not be the man to lose the memory of its chief branches.

4. *But the memory principally depends on the affections.* Love and delight in religion will soon render the recollection of its truths unavoidable. If I forget a friend, his name, his wishes, his last injunction when he left me, the tendency and bearing of his commands, it is in vain for me to pretend to love him; and accordingly on this test our Lord suspends this question; "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "The love of Christ constraineth us," saith St. Paul. And nothing is more certain than that love quickens the recollection, suggests every little occasion of testifying attention, seizes all the smaller incidents which the person beloved is known to take pleasure in, recollects all his intimations, and abstains from whatever would be painful to him. Religion is the memory of the heart.

5. *To shun those scenes which may afterwards fill the mind with recollections hostile to the spirit of Christian truth,* is an obvious duty on this subject. The tablet of the memory can only contain a certain number of records. The heart and all the faculties are propense to the world and sensual things. To retain, therefore, the purity of the mind, to keep the thoughts from distraction in prayer, to be able readily to call up religious associations of ideas, when the necessary business of the day is passed, are amongst the objects of the Christian's efforts. What then shall we say of him who crowds his mind with impure and vain images, who turns not away his eyes from beholding vanity, who conforms himself to the fashions of this world; utterly regardless, not only of his immediate loss of time, and money, and influence,



but of the evil treasure of dangerous associations which he is laying up for all his future life; of the store of sinful thoughts which he has prepared for Satan to work upon, when his most retired hours of devotion return; of the trains of ideas which, like thieves, will invade him and carry off his thoughts from religious truths, when he would give the world to be free from the violence.

6. *Arrangement* may be next adverted to as a means of fortifying the memory. Order in the use of time and the plans of duties; the wise distribution of the day; the times and places for prayer fixed; forethought to guard against interruptions, are of great importance. Religious thoughts will soon fade, if the duty of reviving and strengthening them be left to chance and the accidents of things. Due arrangement will allow of what philosophers term, local memory; the scene, the day, the place, the seat in church, the closet, the self-same Bible, the well known voice of the minister, the solemn hour of prayer, may repair faded impressions on the memory, and assist the recollections of God and sacred things.

7. *Caution against new and violent impressions*, again, gives the memory time to call up its ancient memorials of truth, and prevents often a sudden and perhaps fatal surrender. Satan's art is to carry the citadel by surprise. Some new doctrine is plausibly urged; some sudden discovery in Revelation is vaunted; some old truth is over-stated or falsely applied; some one division of Christianity is magnified to the exclusion of all the rest. The thoughts are apt to be dispersed at the unexpected incursion; we com-

mit ourselves before we are aware; consequences are forgotten. Caution, then, in receiving these violent impulses, must be resorted to. We must, like our Saviour, repel one text of sacred Writ misquoted and misapplied, by saying, "It is written again." We must take time to recall all the branches of truth, and keep in memory what has been so often delivered. Almost all errors in doctrine and declines in practice, have arisen from sudden and too easily admitted impressions, which, like marauders, have carried captive all the religious recollections.

8. *Conscientious diligence in the appointed means of grace* is of the last importance on this subject. Never did any one retain long the memory and feelings of the truths of the gospel who was negligent of these means; and never did any one lose it that was conscientiously diligent in them. Upon whatever pretext men relax in prayer, in reading Holy Scripture, frequenting the public worship of Almighty God, and keeping holy the Sabbath, the lively recollection of Christianity fades, and their salvation is endangered. God has tied us to these means. He has created the entire system of them for our growth in grace. The periodical return of the day of rest, after every six days worldly toil, is especially designed to remind man, to recall religious memory, to sound an alarm in his ear. If he neglects then the voice of the watchman, his blood will be on his own head.

Steadiness to the Church in which we have been educated and blessed, a meek and thankful use of the public and private means of edification it affords, reasonable deference and respect to the ministers who

serve at its altars, affectionate intercourse with them, and aid rendered in their various benevolent and religious designs, are also amongst the best methods of fortifying religious and devout recollections. A fickle, changeable mind, now of one Church and now of another, cannot retain memorials which are perpetually deranged.

9. *Meditation* is of such high importance, that it must be placed alone. Meditation is the voluntary calling up of religious thoughts, fixing them on their objects, and impressing the heart and conscience with them, and the duties they enjoin. Meditation collects the scattered forces of the mind, recalls them to the standard reared in the camp, reviews their number and accoutrements, and examines them as to their habitual discharge of their duties. Our Lord spent whole nights in prayer and meditation. Isaac went out "to meditate at eventide." The Psalmist found "meditation to be sweet;" and implored that "the words of his lips and the meditation of his heart might be acceptable in the sight of his God and his Redeemer."

10. Lastly, *fervent prayer to the Holy Spirit to sanctify the memory*, to strengthen the intellectual powers, to purify the heart, to guide the determinations of the will, to direct to such immediate and remote aids as may strengthen the memory, and to help us in avoiding all occasion of enfeebling it; to fill the mind, in short, with holy images and divine recollections, is a means indispensable to the success of all the rest. Self-confidence will assuredly betray us, as it did Peter, whose remembrance of the warning of his Lord after his fall, intimates that the failure

in recollection had contributed to occasion that denial of his Master.

Two reflections shall conclude this subject.

*The timid hearer* is not to be terrified because he may conceive his powers of memory as to religious things to be lamentably feeble. Are these defects deplored; are the means of fortifying the faculty used; does he as a humble penitent cast himself on the merits of his Saviour, and seek the aids of the Spirit?—then let him not be dejected as if his case were desperate; perhaps disease or an exhausting climate may in part contribute to the defect. Perhaps that defect may not really be so great, as the trembling conscience would suppose. Possibly you may be mistaking of verbal, what I have been saying of practical and substantial memory. You suppose I have been treating of the memory of words, when I have meant the memory of things. Matters of fact, great doctrines, mighty principles, commanding duties you remember; though the recollection of dates, and words, and chapters is difficult. Be consoled then. You do “keep in memory what has been delivered to you,” nor is “your faith in vain.”

But if the righteous be thus scarcely saved, *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* Where the careless hearer; where he who lives without prayer, without a Bible, without a Saviour sought for or desired, without hope and without God in the world?

What will he do, when memory will be compelled to perform its office at the bar of God, when all past

vows will rush upon his mind ; all past sins sting his guilty heart ; all past joys aggravate his sorrows ; all past opportunities of salvation increase his woe. "Son, REMEMBER," will then be the voice of truth, of conscience, of despair.

Now, then, make memory a friend, ere it be too late. Now secure this wonderful faculty as your helper. Now recall a parent's instruction, a parent's prayers, a parent's tears. Now remember the creeds and catechisms you have been forgetting. Now take up the neglected gospel, and act on memory's voice, however faint ; that you may at length embrace and ever hold fast the blessed truths delivered to you, and obtain everlasting life.

## SERMON XIX.

MATTHEW xxviii. 18—20.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

IN tracing out the general beneficial tendency of Christianity on all the highest interests of mankind, we have considered some of the chief features of our Religion in the mystery of Redemption;<sup>1</sup> in the application of that mystery to the human heart;<sup>2</sup> and in several particulars of its effects on the Christian life and conduct.<sup>3</sup>

We now come to THE LAST MAIN DIVISION of our plan, The consummation towards which Christianity is, as we humbly trust, advancing,—The conversion of the world.

And in entering upon this, the topic first presented for consideration naturally is, The commission given by our Saviour for the universal propagation of the gospel; which will lead us to notice, the Authority from which the commission proceeds; the Manner in

<sup>1</sup> Sermons I to VI.

<sup>2</sup> Sermons VII to XII.

<sup>3</sup> Sermons XIII to XVIII.

which it is to be executed ; the Promise of all needful succour given to those engaged in the work.

I. *The authority from which the commission proceeds*, is no other than the universal dominion of our Lord after his resurrection from the dead. "Jesus came and said unto them, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth."

This is a point of the last moment. To attempt to propagate a religion without adequate authority from Almighty God, would be presumptuous as well as hopeless. We look around upon the Heathen and Mohammedan world. We see five-sixths of the human family in the bonds of idolatry and superstition, degraded by an unnatural system of castes, involved in all the laws, usages, civil polity, social state, domestic ties, descent of property, governments, historical traditions of the natives. We see the number and power of an immensely numerous Heathen and Mohammedan priesthood, whose worldly interests, like those of Demetrius and his craftsmen, are linked with the subsistence of their false religion. We know the depravity of the human heart, and the peculiar tenacity with which it adheres to error and sensuality, and repels any scheme of spiritual and holy doctrine. We call to mind the metaphysical subtilties of Hindooism, its transmigration of souls, its all-pervading pantheism, the impure and corrupting legends of its Deities, the maddening festivals which divide the periods of the year, and excite to frenzy the passions and vices of the enslaved multitude. We turn to the fierce bigotry of the Mohammedan, his intolerable pride and hatred of

the Christian name, the vices mixed up inseparably with his creed, the sword which he is encouraged to unsheath, and the sensual paradise to which he is bidden to aspire.

When we place all these obstacles before us, and connect with them the small number of Christians of every class, scattered as governors, colonists, ministers of religion, missionaries, &c. over the heathen world; the timidity of too many, and the selfishness and indifference of more; the false policy which so often withholds the full protection and aid which Christian governments should render to our peaceful religion; the secret infidelity and open profaneness which sap in numbers the first principles of religious feeling; the small amount of funds raised, and the paucity of labourers sent out for the great undertaking; and the comparatively slight impression which has been made during a number of ages on the mass of the Pagan and Mohammedan populations—we may well pause and ask ourselves, on what grounds we can reasonably continue to cherish the expectations, and lavish the lives and property, involved in the propagation of Christianity in distant and insalubrious lands?

The first part of our reply is found in that branch of the commission given by our Lord, which we are now considering.

Our Saviour, risen from the dead, is exalted to the right hand of the Father with “power and great glory.” There he sits, “Head over all things to the Church;” there he abides in his supreme mediatorial majesty, “angels and principalities and powers being made subject unto him.” All power, authority, domini-



on and majesty in heaven and earth are committed to him. He is "heir of all things."

In his divine nature, as one with the Father, our Lord had, indeed, possessed from eternity, glory and majesty; all the attributes and dignity of the only begotten Son. He was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" he was "the Word that was with God and was God; he upheld all things by the word of his power." He was "the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person;" he was, in short, "Jehovah;" the "mighty God;" "God over all blessed for ever."

But "for us men and our salvation," he had "made himself," for a time, "of no reputation;" he had taken upon him "the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, he had humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Here was a voluntary descent from an exalted and glorious previous condition, to one of humiliation and suffering. He was born of a poor virgin. He "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself." At last, in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the altar of the Cross, he offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of men.

In consequence of this sacrifice and the reconciliation thereby effected, he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father the third day; and received the Mediatorial kingdom and throne, which he now possesses, for the further accomplishment of the designs of his redemption. He has now all power and authority given to him, as Mediator, to be exercised in furtherance of the purposes of his incarnation and

death in our stead. "The Lord hath declared the decree, Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

These two kinds of glory and power possessed by our Lord, are to be well noted—the original, which he had as one with the Father before the world was; the derived, which he received as the reward of his obedience unto death. Both are now united in his person as God and Man, exalted to the throne of Mediatorial dominion and power.

This supreme rule, then, over heaven and earth, and all things and persons therein, is a reasonable ground of trust in the labours we undertake for the conversion of the nations. The mighty ransom has been paid. The purchase has been effected. The Lord Christ has "all things delivered unto him of the Father." The worlds of providence and grace are under his controul. The events of empire are in his never-failing guidance. Christ reigns. Christ is Lord of all. He who first made the world, and then redeemed it by his own blood, and now has all power given to him over it to carry forward the actual conversion of mankind to his sceptre, has surely adequate authority to commission his disciples to promulgate his gospel. The nations are already his in covenant, in purchase, in prophecy. The order of affairs throughout the universe of mankind, marches at his bidding. We have only to see that we are prosecuting the benevolent enterprize according to his appointment and direction, to be encouraged under all delays and difficulties. For this is also, obviously important. The full authority of

our Lord is one thing; the question, whether we are propagating his religion in a manner agreeable to his will, is another.

Let us then consider,

11. *The manner in which the commission is to be executed:* “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

1. *The general character of these directions is mildness and persuasion;* knowledge conveyed into the mind of man; moral instruction gaining its influence over it. It is a commission working by motives, benefits, spiritual obligations on the conscience. Here is no force, no crooked policy, no earthly aims, no external terror, no persecution, no scheme of territorial acquisition, no invasion by the sword. Christianity is a healing doctrine; it is the collation of the greatest of benefits in the mildest mode; it is eminently, as we have already considered, “a reasonable service.”<sup>1</sup>

2. *Its extent, wide as the evil it proposes to remedy,* is the next particular, in this benevolent propagation of the true religion. “Go, teach all nations: go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name amongst all nations; beginning at Jerusalem.” Can any scheme be more ample in its benevolence? Are any differences of nation, clime,

<sup>1</sup> Sermon VIII.

caste, external circumstances allowed to interpose between a lost world and the blessings of Christianity? Must we wait, when we approach any new country, or propose to carry the tidings of salvation to the remoter nations, to inquire whether they descend from Jew or from Greek ; whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised ; whether they are polished or illiterate ; whether they enjoy civil freedom, or are in bondage ? No : “ In Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision ; barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free ; but Christ is all and in all.”

3. *A gentle catechetical, parental training of inquirers* is next to be noticed ; embracing all ages and classes in Society according to their several states of reciprocity. “ Go ye and teach ;” that is, disciple, put into training, catechise “ all nations,” in all their subdivisions of childhood, youth, manhood, age, vigour, decay ; with all their varieties of talent, turn of mind, information, habits, passions, prejudices. Go, form schools of Christ ; and admit all without distinction who are willing to be prepared for the true religion. Go, bring into the position of learners, fathers and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants. Especially, Go, train up the young, the immense majority of every nation ; educate them, catechise them, break up the truths of religion into smaller portions for their use. Impart the widest and most comprehensive national instructions ; embrace in your benevolence the entire population of the several regions of the world.

Such is the force of the word in the second verse of the text, which we render, “ teach,” and which in the margin of our Bibles is more simply and exactly

translated, "make disciples." A tender, parental mode of carrying on the entire mass of a nation, from earliest infancy to age, by catechetical instruction, is thus intimated.

4. *The reception of these catechumens after they have been trained, into the religion itself*, by the appointed sacrament of baptism, follows. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

So soon as the preparatory instruction has furnished them with some knowledge of the outlines of the Redemption of the gospel, they are to be initiated into the body of Christ, not by the painful rite of circumcision, as of old, but by the more simple and equally expressive symbol of washing with water in "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This is no unmeaning ceremony, such as the rites which false religions palm on the world; but a reasonable, intellectual service, including a holy pledge, seal, and channel of communicating the greatest spiritual blessings; and constituting a covenant into which the parties enter and dedicate themselves and their offspring to the faith and obedience of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

This implies, that the catechumens are taught, according to their tender or more advanced age, who these three sacred persons in the Godhead are; what they have done for a lost world; and what obligations and benefits the act of dedication involves.

i. The knowledge of the one true God is the foundation of all Christian religion. The existence, attri-

butes, glory, power, dominion of one eternal, self-subsisting Creator, Preserver, Father, Benefactor, Lawgiver and Judge, is the beginning of revealed truth. This infinite and incomprehensible God, one in essence and three in personal subsistence and operation—this eternal Potentate, one in opposition to the Gods of the heathen which are but idols, but triune in person—this one only God, exalted and glorious in all the natural and moral attributes which render him the just object of supreme honour, reverence, love, obedience, in opposition to the mere abstractions and pervasions of the Heathen mythology, which have neither attributes nor sovereignty—here we begin. This the school of Christ teaches to the young disciple.

ii. Nor does the same school fail to explain the state of man, and what the several persons in the trinity of the Godhead have done for him. His first creation as the lord of the creatures; his original uprightness; his lamentable fall; the corruption of his nature in all its powers; his ignorance, alienation from God, propensity to earthly things, pride, conceit, selfishness, ambition, disordered appetites and passions, “death in trespasses and sins.”

Hence his idolatry; “gods many and lords many;” his “not liking to retain” the one God of holiness and truth “in his knowledge,” but “worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for evermore.”

Hence the false religions of Heathenism, the imposture of Mahomet, and the gross heresies and perversions of the true faith in different ages within the pale

of the Christian Church. Thus the first table of the law of God is broken universally by man.

Nor is the second less violated by his disobedience and cruelty to parents, murders and injuries committed against those who are the object of hatred; adultery, fornication and unnatural lusts; robberies and fraud; false witness, deceit and lies; and the coveting the goods and possessions of his neighbour. Such is the state of man.

Then the scheme of Redemption is opened to the young scholar. The love of God the Father in devising a plan of mercy; the grace and pity of God the Son in taking upon him our nature and making an atonement for sin; the influences and operations of God the Holy Ghost, in applying all the benefits of redemption to the heart; regenerating, renewing, enlightening, comforting, strengthening it by grace.

Thus we train the catechumen, as our Church expresses it, to "believe in God the Father, who hath made him and all the world; in God the Son, who redeemed him, and all mankind; and in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth him and all the elect people of God."

We next teach him what mercy God hath further shown in setting forth, sealing and conveying these blessings in the two simple and easily celebrated sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. In the one, representing by the washing of water the internal washing away of sin; and, in the other, by the participation of the consecrated elements of bread and wine, the support derived to the soul by the body and blood of Christ.

iii. We next instruct him in the nature of that repentance and faith which are required of those that would receive the benefits of redemption, and be partakers of the full blessing of the Sacraments.

When this preparatory learning has gone so far as to give us a reasonable hope of the spiritual state of the catechumen, of his fixed desire to renounce the Devil, the world, and his lusts; and of his willingness to dedicate himself and all dependent on him to the service of the one only living and true God in Christ Jesus, we baptize him in “the laver of regeneration;” we “cleanse him with the washing of water by the word;” we call on him to “arise and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord;” we teach him, that he is thus “born of water and of the spirit;” that he is “washed and justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God;” that “Baptism will now save him; not by the putting away the filth of the flesh, but by the answer of a good conscience toward God.”

Thus we go on baptizing all nations, as God blesses our previous training. Parents with their households thus enter the fold of Christ’s Church. The benevolent designs of the God of mercy are fulfilled; subsequent instructions supplying what is wanting, either from insufficient faith or tender age, at the actual period of the obligations of Christianity being laid upon the converted native population.

*5. For diligent subsequent instructions are to be given; “teaching them,”* adds our Lord, “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Here



the word is the one ordinarily employed for the gradual communication of knowledge. It is not that which imports simply the disciplining of men, the putting them in training as pupils of Christianity; but the teaching them, as scholars somewhat more advanced and capable of receiving ampler instruction, "all things whatever Christ hath commanded."

Baptism, therefore, is evidently not to be confined to those who have a full and comprehensive knowledge of Christianity, but may and ought to be administered, although much is afterwards to be learned from the pastoral labours of ministers. Baptism is the privilege of the weak and feeble convert, with his children and house still weaker than himself, when the first training has, by the grace of God, touched his own heart and conscience, and he is able to understand and feel the general vows he undertakes.

Then you go on to teach him and his children and family, "all things that Christ hath commanded." They are within the visible Church, they have now entered the ark, they have now separated from idolatry and superstition, vice and crime, worldliness and spiritual death. Teach them, then, all "things whatever Christ has commanded," as to the duties and vows and habits which are involved in their initiatory obligations to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Teach the father and mother and elder members of the family, so long as the inward life of God appears weak or doubtful in their minds and hearts, what the "birth from above" fully imports; what it is to be really "a new creature in Christ Jesus;" what

to have a "new heart and a new spirit;" what to be a "partaker of a divine nature; to have "the heart of stone taken away, and the heart of flesh" communicated.

Teach them next the importance of the means of grace; the blessed seventh portion of time which the Lord of the Sabbath banks out for spiritual rest and instruction; the necessity of reading Holy Scriptures, of meditation and prayer; the dignity of the public worship of Almighty God; the reasonable subjection and love due to ministers and missionaries.

Teach them, then, gradually, all that Christ hath commanded in his sermon on the Mount, and in his other discourses; all his doctrines, precepts, example. Teach them nothing but what Christ hath commanded; no inventions of men, no superstitions, no additions or subtractions of human ingenuity: but all within the limits of Christ's commandments, communicate faithfully and fully.

Teach also the younger parts of the household, as they grow up, the unspeakable benefits conferred on them in holy baptism, the vows made in their name, the obligations undertaken for them, and which they must either fulfil or lose all the anticipated blessings and privileges dependant on them. Teach them that as they become capable of moral and personal obedience, they become also responsible for themselves; that they cease to be part and parcel of their believing parents and Godparents, and can no longer be represented by them; but must stand before Almighty God on their own footing, as placed under a dispensation of grace, and having had all the blessings conferred upon

them which the mercy of God and the piety of their parents and ministers could bestow.

In this way go on, finally, to teach them the nature and benefits of the second and permanently administered Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, which is to be the means of preserving continually their bodies and souls in the faith, love, and purity of that gospel, into which the first Sacrament initiated them.

It is impossible not to pause here to observe the essential benevolence of Christianity propagated by such a system of gentle, never-ceasing instructions as this; beginning with the first training of the learner, and carrying him on, and all that appertain to him, till this world of conflict is exchanged for one of rest and joy. And surely no part of this system is more evidently compassionate and divine, than that which comprehends the helpless and unconscious infant within the arms of the divine mercy, till he is of age to understand and act for himself—this is entirely agreeable to the order of things in providence as to all matters affecting the state and happiness of children. The parent represents them, acts for them, claims all advantages for them which may accrue, enters into beneficial engagements and obligations, signs contracts, takes possession of titles, dignities, inheritances in their name—on the supposition that the child when of age will confirm by his own acts, when necessary, what the benevolence and forethought of his parent and guardians did and undertook by anticipation for him.

I make the remark, because it is possible that some may have doubts thrown into their minds on the subject of the reception of infants into the Church by baptism. But the commission of our Lord could be understood in no other sense than had, from the time of Abraham, marked the divine proceedings with respect to children. It was addressed to Jews who knew that long before the Mosaical Law, infants had been expressly and by name ordered by Almighty God to be admitted, at the eighth day after birth, into the covenant of grace by circumcision. There had never been any doubt upon the question. The command therefore for the promulgation of the gospel with the corresponding initiatory sacrament of baptism, could never have been understood by them in any other light.

Had the commission been to extend the Jewish religion all over the earth, and had the command run thus, "Go ye therefore and teach" (make disciples, or Jews, of) "all nations; circumcising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;" no one of the apostles would or could have hesitated for an instant—it would have excited no surprise—it would have been merely the continuance of a principle expressly enjoined in preceding dispensations. There would have wanted no new command under the gospel, for the admission of infants into God's merciful covenant, any more than there wanted any new commands for the various matters of natural religion, or for the observation of one day's rest after every six days

of labour, or for a variety of other things, the principles of which the Church of God had been acting upon for thousands of years. A new command would have seemed, indeed, to call in doubt the merciful will of God in the preceding institution and observance of circumcision.

The apostles, accordingly, long hesitated about admitting the Gentiles at all into the Christian covenant without the observation of the Mosaical law ; but they never doubted whether, on receiving them, they should admit also with them the children and households which formed a part of themselves. That the mercy of God should be enlarged to the utmost comprehension under the gospel was natural and in the course of things ; but that it should be narrowed and contracted all at once with respect to the objects of the divine compassion, and that the infants of the Jewish believers should be thrust out of the covenant of grace, on their parents receiving Christ, when they were in that covenant the moment before they received him, would have been wholly contrary to the genius of the gospel, and the order of the divine mercy in the last and most gracious dispensation.

The apostles had already heard their Master say, " Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not." They had seen him " take them up in his arms and lay his hands upon them and bless them." They had heard him declare, " of such is the kingdom of heaven." No doubt therefore seems ever to have crossed their minds. The baptism of " Lydia and her house ;" and of " the Jailer and all his," is mentioned as a matter of course, and perfectly

intelligible to every reader of the Old Testament. St. Paul in the same unartificial manner, alluding to the well-known extent of the administration of baptism, says, “ the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband ; else were your children unclean ; but now are they holy.”

Accordingly, though we have inspired epistles written to Churches during a series of sixty or seventy years after the first promulgation of the gospel, no one allusion is found to any class of unbaptized youth, which must have been numerous in every Church, within a few years after its being founded, had the infants of the converts not been admitted with them into the covenant of mercy.

The universal practice of the apostolic and early Christian Church confirms this view of the case as it lies in Scripture. The heretics of the first four centuries, when they wished to evade the confession of their sentiments, as to the fall of man, still avowed their faith in the baptism of infants, as a point never questioned. Nor was it till the sixteenth century that any body of Christians arose to deny the validity and extent of baptism, as applicable to the children of the faithful. And even now, after eighteen ages, the whole universal Church, including all the Lutheran and Protestant communities, and the smallest subdivisions of persons separated from national Churches, with the single exception of the small body who are known by the name of Baptists, hold the primitive doctrine of infant baptism.

The subordinate question of the mode of administering the rite, I pass over as of little consequence.

Our own Church baptizes by immersion, except when the parents can plead the inability of the infant by reason of health. But baptism by sprinkling, especially in the colder regions of Christendom where necessity dictates it, is agreeable to the general goodness of that God, who "will have mercy and not sacrifice." The import of the original word is allowed to be capable of either interpretation. And the greater or less quantity of the emblematical element is, under a spiritual dispensation, surely of subordinate moment.

It is important further to observe, that all the supposed advantages of baptism in adult years are secured by the primitive and edifying rite of Confirmation, which is retained, after the example of the apostles, in all the branches of Christ's Holy Church; when the parents and sponsors resign their charge, and the catechumen, ratifying and confirming his vows, is solemnly admitted, after due examination, by prayer and the imposition of hands, to the profession of his faith in his own name, and all the personal blessings and privileges of the covenant of grace.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The minds of the young and unstable are sometimes disturbed by persons misinterpreting or misapplying our Lord's command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." This passage, say they, is clearly against the baptizing of infants; for if believing be a requisite qualification for baptism, as children cannot believe, so ought they not to be baptized. It is surprising that those who reason thus, do not advance a step further still, and contend that as believing is here represented as necessary to salvation, it follows also that, as infants cannot believe, so neither can they be saved. Arguments that involve

6. But I return from this digression, if it may be so termed, to notice *the spirit of patient labour and suffering of the ministers of Christ in the execution of the preceding course of instruction.* How do they perform their task? In what spirit do they go to all nations? How do they meet trials, opposition, perverseness, prejudice, banishment, imprisonment, martyrdom? Do they draw the sword of war? Do they enlist their converts under the banners of blood? Do they return evil for evil? Do they disturb the civil order of Government?

No; patience, silence, prayer, the rendering of good for evil is their spirit and temper. They "obey magistrates, are no brawlers, but gentle towards all men, and ready to every good work." These are their

such glaring contradictions must necessarily be false. The truth is, the objectors here introduce into their conclusion an entire class of individuals who were never thought of in their premises. For to whom amongst the Heathens and Jews was the gospel preached at the promulgation of the gospel? Was it not to adults? And to whom amongst the Heathen, Jews, and Mohammedans now, is it still preached? Is it not to adults, i. e., to persons capable of faith or unbelief? And of them every one "that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." The error of applying such passages to infants, is seen at once when other passages of a similar construction are considered. As an instance, let us try to apply the argument to the apostolic rule, "If any will not work, neither shall he eat;" infants cannot work; therefore neither shall they eat. And yet, absurd as such an argument is, it is the only one in the least plausible advanced by those who object to the baptism of infants. Let it be well noted, once more, that there is not one single instance, in the whole New Testament, of any person born of Christian parents, ever having been baptized when grown up.



arms. When they are "persecuted in one city, they flee to another." "Being defamed, they entreat." They pass through "honour and dishonour; through evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known;" rejoicing that "they are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ."

Such a religion, propagated by such authority, and in a manner so entirely benevolent, speaks for itself. Nothing can be so reasonable, so humane, so beneficial, as to use all fit endeavours in diffusing a revelation, which thus adapts itself to the state and wants of man, not only in its contents, but in the manner of its propagation; and which relies simply on the divine authority which issued the commission, and the divine help and grace which first accompanied, and accompanies still, the discharge of it.

For we have to consider,

III. *The promise of all needful succour made to those engaged in the work*; "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Here lies the secret of the amazing success of the gospel in all ages. The presence of Christ with his Church gives it an efficacy not its own. This promise includes the grace which moves secretly the hearts of men; the raising up of ministers to succeed in the apostolical work; and the communication of such support as their cases require.

1. *The grace which secretly subdues and sways the rebellious heart of man* is principally intended by these words, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." They import that our Lord

would accompany by his internal power, the outward doctrine, evidences, invitations, instructions given in compliance with his commission. "By the grace of God I am what I am," said the apostle of the Gentiles. "The hand of the Lord was with them, and many believed and turned unto the Lord." "The God of all grace calleth us to his eternal glory." "It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." "Then hath God unto the Gentiles also granted repentance unto life." "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"—such is the language of Scripture on this subject.

It is thus the apostles went forth. Christ their master was with them. He inwardly disposed the hearts of men to behold the gospel miracles with candour and docility, to become learners in the Christian school, to make by the appointed baptismal rite a profession of their faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and to receive gradually all other things which Christ had commanded them.

It is thus in every age. The weakness of the instruments only the more illustrates the mighty power of Christ. He is with all his faithful people in all ages, and in every part of the world. He secretly and in a manner undiscovered to us, opens the hearts of men, as of Lydia; or breaks them, as in the case of the Jailer. It is to him all the glory is to be ascribed. The force of reason, the conviction of truth, the alarms of fear, the invitations of love would all be in vain, unless Christ, the Primary Teacher, vouchsafed his effectual and special grace and mercy.

And therefore it is that the true power of the gospel has ever been lost or revived, in proportion as the doctrine of the grace of Christ has been maintained or forgotten. It was for this St. Austin contended in the fifth century, and the Reformers in the sixteenth. Means indeed are not to be superseded or undervalued, the responsibility of man is in no way to be called in question, the efforts of his conscience, will, and affections are to be stimulated by their appropriate objects; abuses which would "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness" are scrupulously to be guarded against. But the grace of Christ itself, as the source of all spiritual good in man, is to be avowed, preached, relied on, magnified.

2. All this supposes *a succession of faithful ministers to be provided by the same Divine Redeemer*, to carry on the work begun by the apostles. The commission was evidently given not only to the eleven, but to those also by implication, as well as by the perpetual assurance of divine aid, who might be joined with them, or succeed them in the work; to say nothing of the case of St. Paul, whose commission, though subsequent to that of the twelve, was directly from Christ.<sup>1</sup> The words were clearly addressed to the apostles as the stewards of an economy which was to be committed to their trust, not individually and personally, but in their apostolical character, and as representing the whole body of those who should by their ordination and appointment be entrusted with the same office and execute the same

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Middleton.

commission. How, indeed, could it be said to James or Peter, that Christ would "be with them always, even unto the end of the world?" They personally would soon be no more. But they were to survive in their sacred office; and their episcopal and ministerial services were to continue by a perpetual succession, till the consummation of all things. And thus we humbly rely in the present day, as our brethren in every preceding age have done, and as those in each future one will rely, on the grace and presence of Christ. He continues in his Church that order and subjection which the apostles instituted under his directions. He blesses the presiding ministers and chief overseers, whom, like Timothy and Titus, he calls to discharge the difficult duties of general care and superintendence. He blesses the presbyters and deacons in their high and dignified functions of administering the word and sacraments. He qualifies them for their stations, and directs their steps in his providence. He assists them in founding new, or restoring the spiritual health of ancient, Churches. He blesses the "schools of the prophets"—the Colleges and academical institutions for training up a learned and pious ministry. He accompanies prayers and reading of Scripture, and preaching and sacraments with his Spirit. "Where two or three are gathered together in his name," in any part of the world and in any age, "there is he in the midst of them."

How manifestly this omnipresence of our Lord Christ involves the doctrine of his proper deity, I need scarcely point out; except, as it confirms so re-

markably the view of the mystery of the triunity of the Godhead to which we have already had so often to advert in this discourse.

3. But a concluding blessing dependant on the presence of Christ with his Church, and with which this discussion must now close, *is the communication of all the aid which their especial cases may require.* There is something most touching in this view, in the assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world"—I your Saviour, your Master, your Lord ; I who died for your sins and rose again for your justification. " I am with you" in your secret trials, in the retirement of your closets, when you are desolate, banished, deserted. " I am with you" to cheer, to pour into your hearts light, faith, love, patience, joy, perseverance. I am with you "always"; at all seasons, all the days of your and your successors' lives, under all emergencies ; and most so under the most extreme. No circumstances can arise when I am absent ; no difficulties occur to surprise my vigilance, or find me less present to succour. In all parts of the world, in all sorrows, in all disappointments, in all the moments of dejection, you are not alone—one is present with you, who is more than " Father and mother, wife and husband, children and lands and treasures ;" one who will raise and cheer and strengthen the heart when no one else can. And this is " to the end," not of the life of this or that remarkable person, in this or that age, but " to the end of the world," the consummation of the ages, the accomplishment of the great redemption, the close of all things.

This promise, you observe, goes much further than the assertion of our Lord's universal dominion in the first part of the text. That was the claim of authority entrusted to his hands ; this an assurance of constant aid and compassion to his afflicted Church ; that was to be the foundation of his kingdom ; this the support of those who erected it ; that was the assumption of his state ; this the tender and affectionate assuaging of his Church's griefs and necessities ; that was sublime and magnificent ; this consoling and refreshing to the weary heart ; the first inspires us with courage to form plans of missions and undertake the labour of such a cause ; the second touches the feelings of those already engaged, and assures them of a friend and comforter in the stormy passages of life ; the one reveals the Ruler, the King, the Sovereign on his mediatorial throne ; the other, the gracious Saviour speaking to the heart of the believer by his grace, and giving consolation to the teacher, and inward light and holiness to those who are taught.

But we hasten to conclude by observing, *How surely the ultimate triumph of Christianity is secured by all the topics we have been reviewing.* The authority of our Lord stands in force still ; his commission is unrepealed still ; the presence of Christ with his Church in executing it, remains still. All these principles are as vigorous and unimpaired now, as they were eighteen centuries since. What a dignity and confidence and hope are thus imparted to the Christian cause even under its darkest seasons. Our Master sits exalted on high. Our Master has unlimited dominion and

power. Our Master knows his own purposes, and is proceeding in his own method. He allows indeed intermediate troubles to fall on his Church, he exercises it with long delays, he purifies it by adversities. But he deserts it not. He is preparing, in his own time and manner, its triumph. He is never nearer, than when to the eye of sense, he seems most remote. Every thing is moving on towards the destined glorious result, when all enemies shall be put under his footstool, when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of his grace, and he shall reign supreme from the rising to the setting sun.

Let us not regard then the contempt of the proud, the indifference of the unthinking, or the apprehension of the timid ; our Lord and his cause have always thus been treated. The blessed, ultimate triumphs of Christianity are not less true, nor less secure. At length the end will come, and the commission of the text be fully obeyed and accomplished—that commission which comprehends, as it were, within a few brief words, the whole of Christianity—all its doctrines, all its precepts, all its discipline, all its consolation, all its authority, all its propagation, all its grace, all its triumph.

## S E R M O N    X X .

## ISAIAH lxi. 11.

For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth ; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

HAVING reviewed at some length the commission given by our Saviour for the universal propagation of the gospel, we proceed, in the next place, to consider, from the words of the prophet which we have read, the gradual conversion of mankind, as illustrated by the process of vegetation.

To examine more closely the force of the illustration, we shall institute a comparison between spiritual and natural vegetation in three respects—as to the seed sown ; as to the extent of ground brought under cultivation ; and as to the manner in which the fruitfulness is produced.

I. *The seed sown in this spiritual cultivation* is here described by the words “ righteousness and praise.” This is the seed of the kingdom. This is the doctrine which the sower goes forth into “ the wilderness and solitary place” to sow. “ The Lord God will cause



righteousness and praise to spring forth," having first been carefully sown, "before all the nations."

The terms denote, as is usual in this prophet, the doctrine of Messiah's kingdom; the main blessings of the gospel; God's method of justifying man through the merits and obedience of Messiah, which is "righteousness;" and the returns of gratitude and holy obedience, which constitute our "praise" for the gift.

The word "righteousness" is frequently used in this enlarged and prophetical sense. Thus in the verse before the text, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord," saith the Church, "my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness;" where the one term is evidently equivalent to the other; righteousness is no other than the salvation of Messiah. The like explication occurs in the forty fifth chapter, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring forth together;" and yet more expressly in the close of the same chapter, because the word is more directly applied to man's justification, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

In fact, this is no other than that great blessing of the free remission of sins and acceptance before God as righteous, which is the peculiar glory of the gospel. And therefore the great apostle of the Gentiles, taking up the language of our prophet, employs and further explains the very same term; "The righteousness

of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is upon all and unto all them that believe ;” where the instrumental cause of justification is distinctly stated to be faith in Jesus Christ, that is, the humble reliance of the penitent sinner on the promises of God in Christ Jesus for pardon, and acceptance before him as righteous. Thus, he is justified by faith, and has peace with God ;” being “justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus ;” and “God being just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus ;” “for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Here then we begin. This is the doctrine which we scatter as the good seed. No fruit of holiness and salvation can spring from any other. The gospel comes and addresses man as a sinner ; and then proposes to him God’s wonderful method of forgiveness in the righteousness of his only-begotten Son. The guilt and demerit of man must first be felt. The evil and defilement of sin, as committed against the great and glorious and good Lord and Sovereign of our bodies and souls, must first be acknowledged ; sorrow and penitence follow. The renunciation of “our own righteousness which is of the law,” is the next step. Then the doctrine of the text is the appropriate and only source of consolation ; that to “him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

When this first great blessing of the remission of sins is received into the heart, then the second, which is praise, follows. “The Lord God will cause righ-

teousness and praise to spring forth ;" righteousness to his people, praise to himself: righteousness, the gift bestowed, praise, the acknowledgment of it made. And so in the verse before the text already cited, you will observe, that so soon as the Church is " clothed with the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness," she " greatly rejoices in the Lord, and her soul is joyful in her God ; that is, praise for the gift of righteousness follows that great blessing. In like manner, in the sixty second chapter. the prophet speaks of the Church being made " a praise in the earth ; and in the sixtieth, when he has named " her walls salvation," he immediately calls " her gates praise." And thus the Lord declares generally, in another passage, of Messiah's subjects, " This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise ; to which the apostle probably refers, when he exhorts us " to show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Under this expression, therefore, is included all the gratitude of the humble penitent for the gift of justification, all the peace flowing from that great act of mercy, all the effect and fruit of love to God and man, all that " work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope," and general obedience to the moral law, which the influences of the Holy Ghost within us, produce, by his renewing and sanctifying of our nature ; even as the preceding term comprehends all the meritorious sacrifice of Christ without us, received and trusted upon for our justification before God.

The two produce and constitute a Christian, in the proper sense of the expression. A holy, cheerful,

benevolent life of praise to God, follows on the due reception of the gift of righteousness in Christ Jesus.

This doctrine, then, is the seed of salvation, this is the truth which revelation scatters as the element of eternal life, wherever she penetrates. And as there is the strictest connection in the natural world between the seed sown and the ultimate produce, so is there in the spiritual. No seed but truth, the truth of Messiah's righteousness and praise, can spring up with the fruits of real Christianity. False doctrine will produce a false religion, as bad seed an imperfect harvest; superstitious doctrine will produce a superstitious religion; antinomian doctrine will produce an antinomian religion. As, therefore, the agriculturist spares no pains in obtaining the finest and purest seed-corn, so should the missionary and minister be above all things careful that his seed-corn be good, his doctrine the fine, pure, unadulterated word of inspiration itself.

Let us now proceed to compare the natural and spiritual vegetation,

II. *As to the extent of ground to be brought under cultivation*; "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations;" the world itself therefore is to become this garden of the Lord. The earth, in every part, is to push forth her bud. All nations and tongues and people are to see the spiritual cultivation springing up before their eyes.

It is thus that the nature and extent of the blessings of the gospel are frequently depicted by our prophet ; “ the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them ; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose ; ” “ I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys ; I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree ; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together.”

The sowing began at the Resurrection of our Lord. The commission was no sooner given, than the apostles “ went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them.” Then an immortal seed was sown, which is still multiplying, and will multiply, till it “ fill the face of the world with fruit.”

It is important for us however, here, to pause and inquire into the Scriptural grounds of our expectation that the doctrine of righteousness shall be sown over the whole world. At present, the earth is so far from being the garden of the Lord, that it is a wilderness filled with briars and thorns. It is so far from putting forth generally the buds of life and grace, that it is overgrown with “ the vine of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah.” The narrow confines of nominal Christianity hitherto, and the yet narrower of heartfelt and pure Christianity, together with the apparently slow progress of missions, may well make us stop to ask whether the general current of the prophecies and promises of Scripture agree with the import of the text, in holding

out to us the hope of the ultimate conversion of the world.

1. *Numerous passages, then, seem to settle at once the question.* What can be understood of such texts as the following, if the universal spread of the gospel be not intended, "All the ends of the world shall remember themselves and turn to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him." "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name." "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "Thou hast given him," Messiah, "dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people and nations and languages should serve him." From the rising of the sun, unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles." "The seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

2. *The commission for the propagation of the gospel*, which we lately considered, seems to point at the same extent, as the language of the above prophecies; "Go, ye, and teach all nations;" "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations;" "God commandeth all men every where to repent."

3. Almost all the prophecies also of the coming of Messiah, which appear at first sight to have had their full accomplishment in the promulgation of the

gospel and the conversion of the then known world. are found, on a closer examination of their scope and connection, and the force of the terms employed, to *look forward to an universal diffusion of the salvation of Christ*; that is, to the springing up of "righteousness and praise before all the nations."

For example, we read in the sublime language of Isaiah, "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it; and many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; and he will teach us his way, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the heathen and rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Now, that this was fulfilled, or at least began to be fulfilled, at the first promulgation of the gospel cannot be questioned. Perhaps therefore we might for a moment think that it was then adequately accomplished. But when we consider the force of many of the expressions, and compare them with other passages, doubts arise in the mind. The strong terms of, "all nations flowing" into the Church; the wide period assigned, "the last day," which is known to comprehend the entire period of the evangelical dispensation; the remarkable result, "They shall beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks," an usual figure for universal peace; and the yet more

astonishing fact of the science of war itself ceasing, "They shall learn war no more,"—lead us to conclude that the "germinant" fulfilment, as Lord Bacon expresses it, in the first coming of our Lord, has yet to bud forth in fuller beauty, and to bear its more abundant produce in the universal conversion of mankind, before the plenary import of the terms of the prediction can be considered as answered. This observation applies to a vast variety of similar prophecies.

4. The *chronological predictions*, again, which regularly unfold the chief events of the Church and of the world, and terminate in the establishment of the universal kingdom of "righteousness and praise," confirm the above conclusion. The early prophecy of Noah is of this description. The vision of the four monarchies expounded by the prophet Daniel, as to be succeeded by the erection of the one kingdom of Messiah, is a yet more distinct one; as are also other series in the same prophet, and in the Apocalypse of St. John in the New Testament. And it is to be observed, that we have a key to so much of the emblematical language employed, in these and other prophecies, as to allow us to fix with some certainty the general interpretation. Thus when Daniel, speaking of the image with its head of gold, and breasts and arms of silver, expressly says of Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou, O king, art this head of gold; and after thee shall arise another king inferior to thee;" the scheme of interpretation is fixed; and four general monarchies are depicted. When therefore the prophet goes on to explain, "The stone cut out without hands, which smote the image upon its feet, and grew till it became



a mountain and filled the whole earth ;” of “ the God of heaven setting up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor be left to other people ; but break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and then stand for ever,” we seem to arrive at a conclusion firm and irrefragable.

5. It much strengthens our argument to remember, that these prophecies and series of prophecies were not delivered by one inspired penman only, or under one dispensation ; *but by many prophets under all the periods of the Old Testament, and by many sacred writers in the New.* The prophecies of our Saviour, of St. Paul, of St. Peter, take up the thread of the divine purposes where it was broken off at the cessation of the prophetic spirit at the time of Daniel and Malachi, and carry on again the self-same scheme. The copious prophecies of the Apocalypse, especially, are no new and independent series of predictions, but only the continuance and further development of those of Daniel and the other Old Testament prophets. The same figures are employed, the same kingdoms spoken of, the same great periods assigned, the same events foretold, the same general consummation assumed. All is harmonious, so far as we can judge ; all bears on one glorious spiritual result, the universal kingdom of righteousness and praise, from the beginning to the close of the Bible.

6. For it is not immaterial to consider *that many prophecies scattered throughout the Scriptures* and not in their terms so universal, agree best with the view suggested by the more extensive predictions. The boundless prevalence of the gospel best suits with the

brief but pregnant prophecy coeval with the entrance of sin, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head;" and again, with the prediction of Jacob, that "to Shiloh should the gathering of the people be;" to that made to Abraham, that in "him and in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed."

This view agrees best also with the numerous prophecies of the conversion and restoration of the Jews, of the fulness of the Gentiles coming in with it, and of their reception being as "life from the dead." and "the riches of the world."

It entirely concurs again, with our Lord's language, that "the gospel of the kingdom should be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations, and then should the end be; that "Satan as lightning should fall from heaven" at the approach of his agony; and, that he would be with his Church "always, even to the end of the world," whilst they were going at his command, and preaching the gospel to every creature in all nations of the world.

7. Once more, *the main obstacles to the rapid spread of the gospel for many ages*, are minutely predicted—and predicted as judicial punishments inflicted on the Church for falling into a gradual decay of Christian doctrine and practice. The Eastern and Western apostacies, the persecutions arising from each, their peculiar opposition to the person and mediation of Christ, the period of their prevalence, the lying miracles they should employ, their ultimate, and, as it should seem, contemporaneous overthrow, and the glorious result—"the kingdoms of the world become the king-

doms of the Lord and of his Christ"—are all laid down, and go strongly to establish our general position.

8. Not less so doth *the subjugation and imprisonment of Satan*, the great spiritual adversary, who is described as having raised up these intervening apostacies; and whose captivity is stated as preparatory to the conversion of the world; "I saw an angel come down from heaven; and he laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and cast him into the bottomless pit, that he should deceive the nations no more."

9. That no error is committed in interpreting the prophecies concerning the glory of "the latter days," of the universal conversion of mankind in all their progressive advances and all their development by the successive cultivation of new regions, appears from this, that *the general judgment of the last day is described as following immediately after*, and in the same terms, and including in both cases the entire race of men. To whatever extent, then, that judgment reaches, to the same does the diffusion of the gospel.

10. Lastly, this whole view receives an important confirmation from considering *the scriptural character of God*; his love in giving his only-begotten Son for us; the redemption of the world wrought by no less a personage than that eternal Son clothed in our nature; and the administration of grace committed to the hands of the Holy Ghost, the third person of the ever-blessed Godhead. Moreover, the glory of the divine government in the ultimate overthrow of sin and Satan, and the establishment of a reign of righteousness and praise; the full and transparent vindication of the

ways of God, now so mysterious and unfathomable before the eyes of the intelligent universe ; and the permanent and conspicuous triumph of truth, holiness and love, after a long conflict, over the powers of Satan, sin and error ; with the multiplication of happiness over misery in our fallen race beyond all our powers of conception, when the whole scheme of providence is fulfilled—all tend to confirm the anticipations which our text, in concurrence with the general bearing of Scripture, awakens ; and on which we should not have dwelt at such length, if it were not so essential as an encouragement to the laborious and sometimes discouraging work of missions to which the Christian Church is called. A more direct source of consolation, however, is opened in the third point of comparison between the spiritual and the natural vegetation, to which we now proceed.

III. *The manner in which the fruitfulness is produced ;* “ As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth ; so the Lord God shall cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.”

The stress of the comparison is evidently here. What we observed upon the seed, was gathered surely indeed, but still only by implication. What we stated concerning the extent of the ground to be brought under cultivation, was deduced also from the closing words of the text, but chiefly rested on a series of arguments collected from other parts of Scripture. But the manner in which the fruitfulness shall be produced,

is the main object of the text, and is largely and minutely described. The diffusion of the gospel shall resemble the process of vegetation in the natural world. What the Almighty does by his providence continually in the one, shall be in due time accomplished by his grace in the other. The manner shall be alike. The same kind of mysterious process which goes on when the seed is sown, in order to the production of natural fruitfulness, shall cause the seed of the heavenly doctrine to take root and bear fruit to life eternal.

1. For the spiritual and natural process of vegetation are both preceded by *the same impossibility of being produced on the part of man*; and by the same improbability indeed, abstractedly considered, of the event. The very description of the recurring resurrection of nature fills the mind at once with the conviction of man's inability—"The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the wine with her tender grapes giveth a good smell." What power of men can produce this delightful change? What could, abstractedly speaking, be so improbable as such a birth of the world? And yet, knowing the power and goodness of God, men argue against appearances, and fully expect, during the storms and frosts of winter, the bursting revival of spring. And if any philosophers, so named, should venture to speculate on the impossibility of the verdure and fruitfulness of nature returning, or should presume to declare that such an event would not take place, or should

discourage the preparatory winter labours of the husbandman, he would be justly charged with folly and inhumanity. And are the folly and inhumanity of that man less, who, allowing the truth of Scripture, and not disputing the arguments we have advanced concerning the extent of ground to be hereafter spiritually cultivated, yet denies the possibility of the conversion of the heathen, and discountenances the prudent and patient winter labours of the missionary, which are to prepare for the coming spring?

2. The *uniformity of the divine operations in nature*, and the experience men have of them each succeeding year, inspires hope as to the natural world, and should equally do it as to the spiritual. No principle seems more deeply fixed in the human mind than reliance on the uniformity of the divine proceedings in the sequences of natural causes and effects. What we call the laws of nature, are only the result of this uniformity in particular instances. The whole of human life proceeds on this regularity in the succession of "seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night." The experience of each past revolving period confirms man's expectation for the future.

And what has not God done already in respect of the spiritual vegetation? What is he not doing now constantly in his Church? Is not every individual heart that is softened by the heavenly grace, a specimen of his power? Does not the regularity of his operations in the moral world correspond with that in the spiritual, so far as the cases are parallel; that is, so far as the will of God in the gospel corresponds with

his pleasure in daily providence. And, supposing we have argued justly as to the import of the prophetic word, what is there to forbid our anticipations being as warm with regard to the fruitfulness of the spiritual world in its appointed season, as to that in the natural ?

3. *But the mysterious and gradual nature of the spiritual, as well as natural process*, is another branch of the illustration. We know not how it is that “the earth pusheth forth her tender shoot,”<sup>1</sup> when the spring returns. It defies all the powers of man to trace the mode in which “the garden,” the enclosed and cherished spot (for such will be the world when cultivated and impregnated with the heavenly seed) “causeth the things sown in it to spring forth.” Equally mysterious is the spiritual diffusion of the gospel. “As if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day ; and the seed should spring up he knoweth not how.” Hidden is the process of truth in each human heart, as well as in a collected population—secret, gradual, unperceived in its particular advances. The rapidity of the growth in some cases, the slow process in others, where the seed seems to lie buried and inactive for years, confounds all the curiosity of man. Both in individual cases and in the propagation of the gospel, “the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the spirit.” The mysteriousness in the one process

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Lowth so renders the first clause of the text.

is therefore no argument against the certainty of the event itself, any more than in the other.

4. And yet mysterious as all this is confessed to be, there is in both *a constant connection between the means used, and the desired result*. In the natural vegetation, we know that the seed must be sown, and sown by the toil of the labourer; and that he must “have long patience with it, till he receive the former and the latter rain.” He must also previously prepare his land and “break up his fallow ground,” so as not to sow amongst thorns, before he “casts in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and rye in their places, even as his God doth instruct him in discretion, and doth teach him.”

It is thus also in the spiritual vegetation. “It is the revealed will of God which the divine Spirit, who revealed that will, honours and blesses to the enlightening and salvation of the souls of men. And the usual course of his dealing therein with men, is to proportion the blessing to the means used. His influences are most abundant, where the truth is opened and enforced with the greatest plainness, wisdom, faithfulness, affection, simplicity, and reliance on his promised power; and these influences are, on the contrary, restrained in proportion as the means of making it known fail of this plenitude.”<sup>1</sup>

5. But a main point of illustration in each is, that *the fruitfulness is distinctly known to be, after all, the effect of divine power, and of divine power only*. If the husbandman were to ascribe to his seed, or

<sup>1</sup> Rev. J. Pratt.



labour, or skill the produce he gathers, the impiety would shock every Christian mind. He perfectly knows that the means he uses are but means, as his lost harvests from time to time demonstrate. The fruitful ground, the earth covered with corn, the rice fields singing, as it were, with joy, the garden springing forth with life, are God's work, and his only. So in the spiritual process, the seed must be the good seed of the evangelical doctrine; the best care must be employed in casting it into a prepared spot; the utmost vigilance afterwards must be exercised lest the birds carry it away, or the sun burn it up, or the thorns choke it; but the whole good effect must at last be ascribed to a divine power. It must be acknowledged to be the creative work of God.

And it is observable, that this thought is provided for in the turn of the passage before us. For it is not said, "as the earth puts forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so "the Church" will bring forth righteousness and praise before all the nations," which would most directly correspond to the terms "the earth and garden," in the former clauses; but, "so the LORD GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth;" that is, the Church shall bring forth righteousness and praise, the Lord God causing it to do so.

Probably one reason of the delay of the divine promises now, is to demonstrate in the face of the whole Church the weakness of man, the weakness of instruments, the weakness of societies, the weakness of human expectations and conjectures. Probably the apparatus of means is allowed to remain comparatively

fruitless for a time, in order that God only may be glorified, and not man, on the ultimate success.

6. That blessing is, however, *in each vegetation, sure and undoubted*, according to the mind and will of God which he hath been pleased to make known as to both. It is before our eyes fully and adequately as to the one, it is also before our eyes, as a specimen and in an incipient measure, as to the other. Nothing is more sure and certain than the natural produce in vegetation. Every year witnesses the renewed fruitfulness of the earth. The promise of God fails not. The covenant of providence stands. The bow in the cloud is the pledge of the divine mercy.

And it is the main design of the text to inspire us with faith as to a similar certainty as to the spiritual fruitfulness which the word of prophecy depicts, notwithstanding the impression of sense and unbelief. All the nations shall be rendered fruitful with the doctrine of Messiah's righteousness and praise. It is true they are now like the barren and waste wilderness, where few or no fruits of righteousness are seen, few or no seeds of grace planted, few or no trees of salvation spring up. It is true few sowers are now going forth to sow the seed of the kingdom. It is true that the poisonous plants of sin, ignorance, idolatry, cruelty, oppression, lust cover the surface of the Heathen and Mohammedan world, and choke large portions of the visible Church. But the time shall as certainly arrive for the fulfilment of the divine purposes, as the time arrived of old for the rescue from Egypt and the return from Babylon; as the period was accomplished for the birth and sacrifice of Mes-

siah ; as the day of the Holy Ghost fully came ; as the time of the first spiritual fruitfulness of the then known world was fulfilled in the conversion of the Roman empire in the three first centuries. Men shall be again raised up and qualified for the sowing of the earth ; the universal putting forth of its bud shall mark the divine faithfulness ; and the garden of the Lord, wide as the circuit of the globe, shall “ cause the things sown in it to spring forth.”

Let us, then, in application, first observe, that *the state of the spiritual vegetation in the comparatively narrow field of our own hearts* may serve as a key to all we have been considering. The barrenness naturally as to all spiritual good there, will teach us what must be the greater destitution of the millions who have the same fallen nature with ourselves, with scarcely one of our advantages. What naturally springs up within us but thorns and briars ? No love to God, no holiness, no faith, no repentance, no charity ; all is as a “ desert and salt land.” But what has made the difference ? What has caused your heart to bud ? What has made your mind as the garden of the Lord ? Is it not the doctrine of Messiah’s “ righteousness and praise,” taught by the Holy Spirit ? Then here is the key to the conversion of the world. Feel your own ruin, and you will discern theirs. Perceive the evil of sin yourself, and you will know what it must be in others. Consider the grace which has made your own heart in any measure fruitful, and you will recognise the power which can make the world so also.

*Cease not to use, then, every means, however weak, for advancing the fertility of the earth.* Not only do not with the ungodly sow tares; but be active and incessant in casting in the immortal seed of the gospel. No one can tell what ultimate extent of good the smallest quantity of seed-corn may produce, if perpetually resown as the crops appear. Twelve men filled the world with fruit. There may be again, at any moment when God shall please, a reproduction of that mighty change. “An handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains, may bear fruit that shall shake like Lebanon.” “Cast, therefore, thy bread upon the waters”—thy bread-corn upon the watered field<sup>1</sup>.—“and thou shalt find it after many days.” “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether they shall both be alike good.”

<sup>1</sup> The rice fields during the rains in India resemble pools of water, on which the seed is merely cast by the hand of the sower.

## S E R M O N   X X I .

## 2 CORINTHIANS x. 4, 5.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

SUCH is the striking image employed by the apostle to depict the conquests gained by the gospel over the powers of Satan, sin, and the human heart.

The image is preserved entire throughout the whole passage, which is one of the most noble in the Holy Scriptures.

It proceeds on the same idea as the language of our Lord, "When the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he cometh upon him, he taketh away his armour wherein he trusteth, and divideth the spoil." And as that of the apostle, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

The occasion of the apostle's introducing these triumphant words, was his being charged by the false teachers at Corinth with being actuated by secular

and personal motives in the use of his spiritual authority, and with assuming a boldness when absent, which did not agree with the impression made when he was with them. To this he replies by declaring, in the verse before the text, that though he walked like others in the flesh, as partaking of the human nature, and sharing all its ordinary feelings and infirmities; yet he did not carry on the warfare of Christianity against the powers of darkness according to the flesh, and by the maxims of merely human prudence. No; he was armed in another manner, and reposed his hopes of success on other aid. "For though we walk," he says, "in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." And then the apostle adds, in allusion to the pride and contempt with which the Heathen and Jew, on the one hand, and the false teachers on the other, were actuated, in resisting the gospel and its divinely inspired ministers, "And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."

The subject, then, presented for our consideration is, The spiritual conquests of the gospel over the human heart; which well follows our two preceding topics, The commission given by our Lord for the universal propagation of the gospel; and, The gradual conversion of the world, illustrated by the process of vegetation.

For, in the first of these we showed both the authority on which we act, and the gentle and benevolent character of the means we employ. In the second, we proved that all the nations of mankind were to be included in the intended garden of the Lord; the fruitfulness of which would at length resemble that of the earth, and be produced by a like mysterious, but powerful exertion of divine mercy and grace. When our present topic, therefore, is developed, all will have been considered that seems essential for our encouragement and direction in making known "the glorious gospel of the grace of God." For we now come to particulars; we descend from the doctrine of the power of God operating generally, as in the process of vegetation, to the same power subduing specially and individually the proud resistance of the human heart.

Three points offer themselves for consideration in this spiritual conquest; The Fortresses which resist the power of Christ; the Weapons employed against them; the Success of the warfare.

1. *The fortresses which resist the power of Christ* are the hearts of fallen men, with their unnumbered rebellious thoughts and imaginations dictated by pride and conceit. For the apostle explains the figurative expression "strongholds," by "imaginations," and a "high thing exalting itself;" and afterwards speaks of "those imaginations and this high thing," being "cast down" and subdued; and of all the "thoughts" of which they were composed, being "brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." This at once opens the whole passage.

The human heart, since the fall of Adam, is a fortress in the hands of a rebel foe. The reasonings and imaginations, the prejudices and sophisms, the systems of error and long-fixed intellectual and moral habits, the lusts and appetites, the maxims of false philosophers, and the heresies and perverseness of conceited teachers, resemble the ancient fortifications and strongholds of a revolted city. They are like those of Babel's tower, or of the city of Jericho of old, or like the walls of farfamed Babylon, with their turrets and their defences, and the prodigious masses of their towers and battlements. Whilst the lofty citadel in the midst, rising up towards heaven and commanding the whole of the place, represents that "high thing" which especially "exalts itself;" that intellectual pride which more eminently erects its front against the knowledge of "the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."

St. Chrysostom observes, "that the apostle refers in the text to the pagan philosophy of his day, and the force of sophisms and syllogisms."

The case of Corinth itself, with its vast idolatrous population, its intermixed Jewish inhabitants, and its feeble Christian Church, is well known. That city in its heathen state was the seat of refinement, commerce, riches, luxury, profligacy—it was the abode of learning, the arts, eloquence, philosophy, the schools of science. Situated on the isthmus between the Peloponnesus and Achaia, and commanding the Ægean and Adriatic seas, it was, in fact, the key of Greece. There it stood erect, like Athens and Rome, with its polytheism, its religious mysteries, its false and airy philosophy, its



endless disputations, its metaphysical theories, its vices, its refined corruptions, its popular fables involved in all the branches of the civil and military services, and penetrating to every detail of social and domestic life.

Especially, that loftiest of the strongholds, that "high thing"—that *ὕψωμα*, as the apostle calls it—the intellectual might of the leaders of the philosophic sects, the pretended sublime doctrine of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, rose above the rest of the defences, and lifted high its crest in pride and self-satisfaction.

When, therefore, the knowledge of the one living and true God, and the obedience to Christ, his only-begotten Son, as incarnate, and dying a sacrifice for sin, were set before them by St. Paul, and they were summoned to surrender, they resisted the new and strange demand; it appeared "foolishness" unto them; they stood erect in proud defiance; they spurned the thought of submission; they entered on a thousand objections, and raised up new battlements of difficulty. More particularly pride, like a citadel, refused to yield for an instant, even when the other defences seemed likely to be carried.

But this was not all that the apostle had to meet with at Corinth. The Jewish zealots opposed with equal acrimony the doctrine of the gospel, and stirred up the Gentiles to resist its progress. Their superstitious ceremonies, their sects and traditions, their high notions of superiority over the Gentiles, their fond dreams of a temporal Messiah, their impatience under the Roman yoke, their indignation at any at-

tempt to disparage their external Mosaical rites, and especially circumcision, presented a terrible front of strongholds against the entrance of Christ. Thus “the preaching of the Cross was to the Jew a stumbling-block; whilst to the Greek it was foolishness.”

Add to this, the divisions and disorders which rent the Corinthian Churches in consequence of the infusion of Gentile and Jewish philosophy and maxims amongst them; “Satan transforming himself into an angel of light;” “deceitful workers” creeping in; men insisting on circumcision “lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ;” litigious brethren going to law with brethren, even before the unjust; vicious and false Christians committing such sins as were “not so much as heard of amongst the Gentiles;”—these, though few in number, troubled the unstable and infant Church, and raised up bulwarks and lofty towers within the Christian inclosure itself, against the obedience of Christ.

Such was the case at Corinth; and such is the situation of the world around us now. Names are changed, but things remain substantially the same. There is nothing new in Christianity having to go out against the mighty power of sin, Satan, and the human heart, concealed behind the fortresses of idolatry, imposture, heresy, divisions, and speculations of a thousand forms. The various imaginations, sophisms, and reasonings differ only in degree. The fallen nature of man is the same; the pride of intellectual might the same; the vain reasonings and objections against truth the same; the reliance on ceremonies, superstitions, and traditions the same; the lofty citadel of pride rising erect

above all the rest, the same. The two main divisions also of error are the same. The one respects natural, the other revealed religion. The one resists "the knowledge of the only living and true God;" the other, "the obedience of Christ." The first appears chiefly in Heathen and Mohammedan countries; the second, in the nations of Christendom. There is, in short, nothing in the polytheism of Asia now, different in substance from that of Greece and Rome two thousand years since. There is nothing in the fierceness, bigotry, and hatred of the name of Christ, in Mohammedanism at the present day, essentially different from the fierceness and intolerance, and bitter resistance to the Messiah of the Jewish zealots of old. There is nothing in the heresies and divisions and party-spirit and false teachers now, materially different from those of the Corinthian Churches.

For all these strongholds are built, erected from the same materials—the corruption and pride of the fallen heart of man. Let each one look into himself, and he will trace the opposition to Christ and holiness which lurks there. The understanding of each of us by nature is full of darkness; the imagination and fancy, vagrant and presumptuous; the reasonings, false in their premises as well as conclusions. There stands the sinner like a revolted city; there are the towers and bulwarks; there the citadel frowning over the rest of the works.

The knowledge of God indeed and the obedience of Christ are acknowledged in Christian countries as parts of a national creed; but the real bearings of these great articles of faith are misunderstood, or if

understood, resisted. The Scriptural knowledge of God in his being, attributes, sovereignty, moral government, holiness, law, are unwelcome. The obedience of Christ in his deity, atonement, grace, kingdom, example, authority are unwelcome. Repentance for sin and renunciation of Satan, the world, and the flesh are unwelcome. Faith in the merits of a divine Saviour dying in our stead, is unwelcome. Submission to the illumination and renewal of the Holy Ghost, is unwelcome. A holy, retired, spiritual, unworldly life of watchfulness and prayer, is unwelcome. All these topics, that is, all the things in which real Christianity consists, are unwelcome; and if they are pressed upon the sinner's conscience, become the object of resistance. The peculiar sophisms which each one frames, his evasions of the fair force of argument, his refusals to submit to truth, the objections, misrepresentations, and dishonest artifices which he employs, resemble the fortresses of a revolted city. Whilst the powers of the intellect, inflated with pride, raise aloft its summit, like a citadel, and resent with scorn the very proposal of a surrender.

Let us proceed, then, to consider,

II. *The weapons employed against the spiritual fortresses.* "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God"—a brief, but emphatical declaration, which touches on the very spirit of the gospel of Christ. The apostle "walked" indeed, as we have already observed, "in the flesh," as a human being dwelling in the body, and living in the world like others; but he did not "war after the flesh," as

his opponents insinuated; he had no petty, personal, earthly ends; he relied not on "an arm of flesh," as the prophet expresses it; he did not go forth trusting to reasoning, moral suasion, the fitness of things, intellectual effort, eloquence, artificial address, as the philosophers of the age, the Jewish zealots, and the false apostles did. No. "The weapons of his warfare" were of another temper. They were, on the one hand, "not carnal" or fleshly either in themselves, or in the manner in which he used them; but, on the other, they were "mighty through God," deriving their power and success from heaven, and endued with a force not their own.

1. *His weapons were not carnal or earthly in themselves.* The execution of Christ's Commission in the catechetical and gentle manner we have before described, was no carnal weapon; the putting young and old in training for an intelligent dedication of themselves in Baptism to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was no carnal weapon; the subsequent course of instruction was no carnal weapon;<sup>1</sup> these methods were not accommodated to the taste, nor formed after the opinions of men; they were not such as the carnal wisdom of heathen philosophers, Jewish zealots, or false apostles would dictate or approve.

The weapons in that first age, as in every subsequent one, were holy preaching, holy living, holy suffering.

We preach the unity, perfections, and glory of God; his infinite wisdom, power, and holiness; his dominion

and righteous sovereignty; his law; his future judgment of the world; his right over man.

We then preach Christ crucified; his redemption of man, fallen from this great and holy God; his incarnation, sacrifice, kingdom, grace.

We open next, the doctrine of the Holy Ghost in his personality, influences, operations in the regeneration and sanctification of the soul of man after the lost image of God.

An authoritative, but meek call to repentance and submission of heart to God, on the footing of a dispensation of mercy, follows.

The corruption of man's nature, his inability of himself to do any thing spiritually good, his ignorance, vanity, and self-conceit; the folly of his reasonings and objections; the presumption with which he argues against God, are then stated.

We urge him next to prayer for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that he may truly "repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

The moral law, as the rule of life, with all the explications of it in the New Testament, is now enforced as "the fruit of faith and following after justification."

The dignity of the holy Sabbath, of the public worship of Almighty God, and of the sacraments, with the paternal order and discipline of the Church, as established by Christ and his apostles, next take their due place.

The Christian life, in all lowliness and retirement, in all devotion and charity, in all watchfulness and preparation for heaven, close the general topics of holy preaching.

These are none of them carnal weapons ; but the spiritual, unadorned, interior arms provided by the divine Saviour.

And, when these are accompanied by holy living and holy suffering, they constitute the entire armour, the panoply of God.

2. But they are, further, *not to be employed in a carnal or fleshly manner*. These truths are to be inculcated, not with affected eloquence, displays of human learning, the wisdom of words and the vagrancy of the human fancy, like the heathen philosophers. Good sense, order, our best powers put forth, are indispensable, indeed, as we see in the holy prophets and apostles ; but this is quite another thing from the pride of oratory, which attracts admiration to itself rather than fixes the whole soul of the hearer on the mighty truths delivered. This would render them “carnal” in their effect and bearing, however orthodox the statements in themselves might be.

Nor are they to be handled in a way of bitter controversy, satire, contempt of others. This would be carnal.

Nor is the gentle discipline of the Church to be aided by the false supports of secular compulsion and terror on the one hand ; or by the chicane of dissimulation, craft, and concealment on the other. Nor, again, is it to be evaporated by a spirit of schism, division, party-spirit, worldly interests, the fickleness of private opinion.

In the worship of God, also, all splendor and vanity, pictures, images, incense, processions, gorgeous vestments, commandments of men, traditions, superstitious usages are to be shunned.

Such methods of adorning and using the spiritual weapons of truth may appear good to the carnal mind ; they may commend themselves to those who judge after the flesh. But they are not the method prescribed in the text. They are earthly. They fortify and garrison Satan's strongholds, instead of pulling them down.

Such was not the apostle's method of wielding the weapons of his warfare. See him in the midst of scorn, reproach, affliction, difficulties, persecutions, death. See him "accounted the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things." See him "in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils of the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren."

And yet observe his meekness under injuries, his tenderness towards his flocks, his holy patience, his wisdom before kings and rulers, his equanimity when assailed by false apostles, his perseverance and fortitude during a long life of self-denial, grief, and woe. "Being reviled, he blesses ; being persecuted, he suffers it ; being defamed, he entreats."

No ; his weapons are not carnal, either in themselves, or in his manner of using them. He and his fellow apostles, and, with the exception of his miraculous powers and inspiration, his successors in every age, go out at the command of Christ. They advance towards the revolted city, they count the towers, they survey the citadel ; they are undismayed ; they seek for no carnal instruments ; they content themselves with the holy preaching, the holy living, and the holy suffering which the great Captain of salvation has enjoined.



3. Nor are they disappointed. *Their weapons, weak as they are in the eye of the flesh, are "mighty through God;"* they derive their power from the divine appointment, the divine blessing, the divine operation interiorly carried on by "the Lord that speaks in righteousness, mighty to save."

With the extraordinary help of miraculous and direct inspiration vouchsafed to the apostles we have now no concern. That ceased with the occasion, the first promulgation of a new religion. But in all other respects, our weapons are, like his, "mighty through God." "The preaching of the cross," is still "the power of God and the wisdom of God." "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." We "are not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

We all understand, from the histories of Scripture, the difference between carnal and merely human schemes, and those which are made "mighty through God." The tower of Babel fell not by carnal weapons, the ordinary means of destruction, but by the confusion of tongues divinely inflicted. The walls of Jericho feel flat before the Ark, and the blast of the rams' horns, and the seven-times repeated circuit made by the priests; that is, by weapons rendered mighty through God, and not by the common operations of warfare. So the hosts of Midian were discomfited by Gideon's pitchers and lamps. In like manner, Goliath was slain, not by ordinary skill and the armour of Saul, and

the process of a combatant, but by the "sling and the stone" of a stripling in "the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom the Philistine champion had defied." Nor was Babylon taken in the usual manner of storming a citadel, but by the gates of brass being left open, and the maddening festival of Belshazzar having disarmed the city, as the prophet foretold.

Thus it was not the apostles themselves, nor their doctrine, nor their living, nor their suffering which were thus mighty; any more than it is the preaching and lives of their successors in the present day; but the weapons of their and our warfare are rendered mighty by virtue of a power which God's Holy Spirit adds to the weapons; and by which the attention of men is awakened, the conscience alarmed, the will gained, the whole soul subdued to the voice of truth.

There is accordingly an antithesis in the two parts of the phrase—"not carnal, but mighty through God"—which places in direct contrast the apparent weakness of the means used, and the mighty effects. What so weak, what so feeble, what so inadequate to the conversion of the world, what so destitute of all might, as the words of the minister of grace, supported merely by a holy life and patient sufferings. And yet, in truth these weapons are mighty through God, "who in nothing sheweth more his glory," as one observes, "than in confounding glory by infamy; in nothing sheweth more his power, than by confounding power by weakness; in nothing more his wisdom, than by that which the world accounts folly."

Let us then, lastly, proceed to consider as we proposed,

III. *The success of the warfare.* What the degree of might is, which is thrown into weapons so weak, may best be judged of by the effect; “the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

The image is still preserved. The human heart, as we have seen, is the stronghold with its tower and its citadel. The weapons employed against it are “not carnal, but mighty through God.” The success is now set forth in correspondent terms; the works are demolished—the citadel surrenders—the garrison to a man is taken captive.

1. *The works are demolished*—“to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations.”

The conqueror enters triumphantly upon the ruins of the revolted fortress. The Corinthian, the Ephesian, the Philippian idolatry fell, in the primitive promulgation of the gospel, before the unaided doctrine of a crucified Saviour. The hatred and bitterness of the Jew were speedily silenced by the destruction of his temple and polity soon after the date of this epistle. The false apostles in the infant Christian Churches were heard of no more—not even their names have survived. The imaginations and sophisms and objections of the metaphysical reasoner, and of the vicious and impure devotee, were cast down also, by the doctrine of Christ.

In each succeeding period of the Church, the success has been of the same kind, though impeded by the two great apostacies,—the Eastern opposing, for alas many, many centuries, the knowledge of the one true God in Christ Jesus; the Western, the Mediation of the same Saviour.

Every individual conversion however is a heart taken, where the strongholds of error are pulled down, and its flighty imaginations and schemes of religion laid low. It is the multiplication of these conversions, with their influence on the mass of the people, which lays the foundations of national Christianity. And these have been laid from time to time, as the history of missions in each age testify, in almost every country of Europe and Asia, as well as in our own.

In these cases, whether individual or more numerous, the success of the spiritual warfare is seen in the submission of the heart to the doctrine of Christ. The rebel fortifications are demolished. The speculations and fancies of men are bowed to the sentence of revealed truth. Whether they were open idolaters, or the followers of a military impostor, or bitter enemies to vital Christianity, or subtle and crafty disputants and heads of heretical bodies, or leaders of divisions in the Church—whether they were like the Jews, and false apostles, and Gnostics of the first age, the Arians of the third and fourth, or the Socinians of the sixteenth—the submission of the whole soul, of the understanding, the conscience, the will, the affections, to the gospel, is the sure effect of the weapons of the warfare having been made mighty through God.

2. *The last and most lofty tower, the citadel, also surrenders.* The high thing that especially exalts itself; where the peculiar strength of the fallen heart lay; where prejudice and pride had entrenched themselves most strongly; where some favourite speculation had reared up its lofty crest and refused to listen to terms—this is at length carried. Long after the works of the city have fallen, the citadel holds out. The pride of man, with some lust or other, collects itself in the centre, gathers in the garrison to its defence, and with presumptuous air refuses submission to Christ. Some branch of revealed truth, some objection to mysteries, some unwillingness to receive the yoke of Christ, some fear of the world, some shrinking from the reproach of the cross, some easily besetting sin of the flesh or of the mind, some proud speculation as to the operations of grace, or the secret purposes of the Most High, lodged in the breast, holds out, after all had appeared to have submitted, and the works of Satan to have fallen.

But at last the penitent so learns his own ignorance, the glory of Christ, and the sin and danger of human opinions, that he yields without reserve; the high place which exalted itself against the knowledge of God and the obedience of Christ surrenders, and the garrison submits at discretion.

3. For this is the third branch of the success; “*and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*” The thoughts are the last enemies which are captivated. The associations of ideas are linked so closely with fleshly reasonings, conclusions, habits, that it is only when the high thing exalting itself has

fallen, that these vagrant troops can be brought into any thing like a general submission. The intellectual operations do not easily take law from Christ. But at length the citadel having surrendered, the garrison to a man is taken captive. Reverential awe, fear, humility, faith, love, gratitude govern the whole soul, and occupy the busiest thoughts. The affections sway these first creations of the mind. The Holy Spirit also, renewing and re-creating all the dispositions and inclinations of the soul, takes captive every rebellious idea. All is subdued to the divine law. The sinner being conquered by grace, and led in triumph by love, becomes by a sweet constraint obedient to the Saviour's teaching and command. Every single thought is captivated. No voluntary act of the understanding, no reasoning is allowed to stand out; but the whole inmost soul becomes the willing servant of God in all his doctrines and statutes. Nay, the very obedience to Christ which formed the main obstacle before, now constitutes the main recommendation of the gospel; and his mind so fully acquiesces in the scheme of salvation, that no thought is allowed to rebel.

Let, then, *those who have never yet yielded to Christ, now at length surrender*—this is our first practical point of application. Now the herald of peace enters the gates, as it were, and proposes again the gracious terms of reconciliation. He comes “as an ambassador of Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, he prays you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” Listen to the call. Renounce the miserable revolt. Quit the hard, usurped, deceitful

dominion of Satan. Open the gates that the King of Glory may come in. Demolish with your own hands the strongholds of sin; cast down, as rapidly as you can, all your vain fancies and imaginations. Pull down without pity the yielding citadel. Let Christ carry into captivity every thought. Let him rule Lord of your conscience, Lord of your understanding, Lord of your will, Lord of your affections, Lord of your whole soul. Let every mutinous reasoning be silenced. Let every thought wait upon the conqueror in meek obedience.

And if you feel the difficulty of all this, as you unquestionably will do, then pray fervently for the grace of the Holy Spirit to render the summons of the gospel "mighty through God." It is not the herald, the messenger, the ambassador, the voice that can subdue the fortress. Weak is his effort. But pray, I entreat you, that the "might of God" may be infused into it, so that the heart may be carried—the high tower levelled with the dust, and that Christ may lead you captive in his glorious triumph !

Let those, in the next place, who are in the obedience of Christ, *be ever watchful that none of the old strongholds be rebuilt*; that sin and pride be not allowed to re-enter and raise their ramparts. Let the native convert dread the return of his imaginations and habits. Let his metaphysical speculations be kept down. Let every thought be preserved in obedience to Christ. Let those who once were poisoned with something of Jewish bitterness, or were led away by leaders of sects and authors of divi-

sions in the Church, like the false apostles, guard against the self-conceit and high thing exalting itself, which is the source of these schisms and heresies. And if any have declined and departed from God, and have relapsed into the pride, and haughtiness, and lusts under another name, of their unconverted state, let them now return. I come out to summon them, as it were, as deserters from the banner of the great Captain. I bid them submit to his gracious call, lest he “swear in his wrath that they shall not enter into his rest.”

And in our meek endeavours to propagate the conquest of truth amongst the Heathen and Mohammedans, let us ever remember, *that our weapons must not be carnal*, either in themselves, or in the manner of our employing them; but that, on the contrary, we must acquiesce in their appearing weak and foolish, and even contemptible—a stumbling to the Jew and folly to the Greek—to the eye of carnal prudence. But let us ever act in that spirit and temper which God will most recognize with his favour, and render mighty through his own divine spirit. The missionaries who have been most successful ultimately in the spiritual conquest of the gospel over the human heart, have ever been the humble, the self-denying, the meek, the gentle—those who most manifestly have united soundness of doctrine with holiness of life, and patience in suffering.

A fierce, worldly, contemptuous spirit God never honours. A disorderly, changeable, fickle temper, like that of the false apostles, God never honours. A spe-



culative, daring, inventive spirit, God never honours. The intellectual pride of modern boast, God never honours. But the soul which labours in the warfare of truth with the sole weapons which God has provided, and in the temper which God approves, will not be without those mighty effects which God attaches to such means. In all our Churches and Societies, there is much of what the apostle would term "carnal weapons" to be watched against. Every Christian body must judge for itself what comes under the head of legitimate means, and what verges towards a carnal policy. But let us ever remember, that the fairest promises of success in our endeavours, do not arise from outward wealth, external splendour, great apparatus, that which commends itself to human wisdom and a fleshly taste—but from humility, retirement, purity of doctrine, holiness of life, and meekness in suffering for the truth's sake.

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## S E R M O N XXII.

MARK viii. 38.

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.

THAT any should be ashamed of Him whom all angels worship, and who came into a world of misery to give himself by an infinite act of love to die for sinners, would be wholly incredible, if we did not know the depravity and deceitfulness of the human heart. There is, however, no sin to which the new convert to Christianity is more powerfully tempted, and none which leads larger numbers of professed Christians to act habitually in too many respects against the light and conviction of their consciences. As Christ himself had, so has his cause, a state of humiliation here, before its state of exaltation and glory hereafter. As Christ was “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from him, and he was despised, and we esteemed him not;” so his cause also in this world is contemned and misrepresented and scorned.

The solemn warning, therefore, of our Lord in the text, comes properly to be considered after the

great topic of the propagation of Christianity, which has occupied us in the last three discourses. In reviewing which, we shall call your attention to the Danger; the Guilt; and the fearful Consequences of being ashamed of Christ.

I. *The danger* arises from the general propensity of the fallen heart of man to shrink from what is accounted weak, dishonorable, ignominious in the eyes of others. He wishes to stand well with his fellows; he avoids, if he can, what incurs disgrace, what is decried as mean and unreasonable, what injures his reputation for sagacity and talent, or may expose him to scorn and calumny. And especially does he do this with respect to religion, where his own resolutions are apt to be weak and treacherous, the demands of Christianity at times to appear strong, and where he is aware of the peculiar dislike and apprehensions of mankind.

False shame therefore is a temptation of extraordinary force as respects the gospel, particularly with the young, the susceptible, and persons of learning, taste, and station in Society.

Shame, in its due place, is a passion capable of subserving the highest and best purposes. It is a guardian of virtue in our present fallen state. It gives an instinctive warning of what is wrong. It is the sentinel placed before the conscience. "What fruit had ye then," saith the apostle, "in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" "I was ashamed, yea even confounded," saith the penitent Ephraim, "because I did bear the reproach of my youth."

“ Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination ? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush, therefore they shall fall among them that fall.” From such passages we learn, that shame is the first mark of penitence, when duly exercised, and the last proof of desperate wickedness where wholly lost.

The occasion of our Lord’s uttering the warning of the text, was his unfolding to his disciples the approaching ignominy of the cross. Peter, upon this, ignorant of the mystery of redemption and the true genius of his Master’s kingdom, ventured to chide him. Upon which Jesus “ turned about, and looking upon his disciples rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan ; thou art an offence unto me, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples, he said unto them, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it ; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?” And then in the text, “ Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

The danger, then, of being ashamed of Christ, arises from the opposition of the human heart to contempt and reproach, from its dislike to the doctrine of our

Lord's sufferings, to the self-denial this doctrine imposes, the daily cross it calls on us to take up, and the calumnies and temporal losses, including that of life itself, to which it may subject us.

The circumstances of different ages and different classes of persons vary; but the principle, like all other great principles of our fallen nature, remains. As long as man inclines to external and sensible things, shrinks from ridicule and contempt, and is fond of the praise of his fellow-creatures, so long will he be in danger of evading whatever in Christianity calls for self-denial, and reproach, and temporal inconveniences and sufferings.

In the case of the Jews, this is clear. They had such notions of a temporal Messiah, a temporal kingdom, a temporal glory, that the humble and despised Jesus, especially in his agony and death, was a stumbling-block to them. Their pride of descent from Abraham, their contempt for the Gentiles, their enthusiasm for Moses and the Law, their reliance on circumcision, their "ignorance of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own," rendered the doctrine of our Lord's cross an object of such scorn and reproach, that they had agreed early that "if any one acknowledged that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." In addition to all this, they were in our Saviour's time so degenerate, worldly, and addicted to the traditions of men, and every species of vice, that they were emphatically "a wicked and adulterous generation," sunk in iniquity; and adulterous and unfaithful to the covenant of their God.

The disciples also partook so far of some of those opinions, from the early habits of their minds, that,

much as they loved their Master, and firmly as they confessed his Messiahship, they were little aware of the mysteries of his religion, the nature of his sacrifice, and the amount of self-denial which would be required in order not to be ashamed of his cause.

The case is substantially the same in every age. Professed Christians are perpetually in danger of being ashamed of Christ. Not of the name of Christ; not of the creed which they pronounce in the Church every Sunday; not of the general mystery of his person and sacrifice; not of the chief articles of ordinary morals; not of the duties of the public worship of his name, and the celebration of holy sacraments, nor of the necessity of shunning profaneness and the grosser vices of the world; but of those particular branches of faith and a holy life, which involve the cross, self-denial, and the loss of reputation, of character, of influence, of their interests in life, the affections of those whom they love, and their general standing amongst men.

There is a certain boundary of moral and religious propriety in every subdivision of professed Christians, resulting from the standard of Christian truth and Christian example, which generally obtains—a kind of neutral ground between the world and the spiritual Church.

This boundary is never commensurate with the real Scriptural rules of duty and feeling; but proceeds on a sort of compromise—ever changeable, now more relaxed, and now somewhat more closely drawn in, according to the fluctuating opinions of men. Within this boundary, religion, and Christ, and truth, are not indeed fully acted upon and honored, which they

cannot be ; but are tolerated, all perhaps generally commended. But beyond it all is run down as weak, as extravagant, as enthusiastic, and symptomatic of a want of sense and knowledge of the world, and of a disregard to our position in Society.

The danger, then, of being ashamed of Christ and his cross just springs from this source.—Men do not like to go beyond the line of reputable religion, however low it may have sunk. They strive hard to shun what the world accounts so foolish, and decries with so much satire. They ask the world around them how far they will allow them to proceed without condemning them as excessive.

In ages therefore of great decay of spiritual religion, as at the time of our Lord, at the period of the Reformation in Europe in the sixteenth century, or in our own country immediately after the Restoration, or, may I not add ? in the Christian residents in India some years since, the danger is inconceivably increased—in proportion, indeed, as the standard of opinion had more widely receded from the unerring rules of Scripture. The prodigious scorn with which the historians and other writers who record the popular feelings of their day, speak of the primitive Christians, of the Waldenses and Albigenses, of the Reformers and others in later periods, whom we now know to have been the excellent of the earth, is only a specimen of the remark I am now making ; and is a gage likewise of the danger to which the young and conscientious were exposed to shrink from the fearful trial.

The peril is increased, because there is such a thing, undoubtedly, as enthusiasm, which no one defends ;

there is such a thing as mistaking the duties of our age, our sex, our circumstances; there is such a thing as calling rudeness and self-will by the name of courage for Christ; there is such a thing as ill-temper and coarseness assuming the garb of piety; and of young persons especially, going beyond the proprieties of their station, or "giving," as our Saviour speaks, "that which is holy unto the dogs, and casting their pearls before swine."

Under the convenient mask, then, of these cases of excess, false shame too often lurks, vain excuses are framed, timidity and cowardice hide themselves under the guise of prudence, and the real self-denial of the cross is evaded.

It is scarcely possible, therefore, to speak too strongly of the danger. All the propensities of our nature incline so powerfully on one side, that we can scarcely lean too much on the other. We must ever remember that, after all the deductions for folly and moroseness are conceded, there remains a mass of peril still in almost all circumstances, of being ashamed of the peculiarities of the religion of Christ; of the doctrine of his cross and passion; of his atonement and grace; of the holy retired life and separation from the spirit and amusements of the world, which he requires; of a determined avowal of our dependance on him, our expectations from him, and our obligations of devotedness to him; and of venturing all, even our very lives, rather than deny him or be ashamed of him in this evil world.

The danger is still more imminent with respect to our native converts. If all who know or suspect the



folly of their ancient superstitions, and are in some measure convinced of the truth of Christianity, in the neighbourhood of our several missions, would act boldly on their convictions, and come forward in search of further instruction, the conversion of India would be gradual indeed, but extensive as the bursting out of spring. But they are ashamed of Christ, even in the twilight guesses which they have attained of his gospel. They are not prepared to suffer for truth. They shrink from losing station and caste. They dread families, wife, children, servants, dependants. Thus they "hold," detain and imprison the small measure of "truth" they possess "in unrighteousness," as the apostle speaks. They "like not to retain God in their knowledge." "The invisible things of him which are clearly known, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead," they regard not aright.

The excuses which they frame for delaying their profession of Christ, prove the extreme danger they are in. They say, "It is all the same; we worship one God as well as yourselves"—forgetting that the sacred term, God, in their use of it, means, the God of Mahomet, or of the Hindoos; a God without reference to the revelation of his will in the gospel; or an abstraction, a pantheistic perversion, a nothing, without attributes, law, sovereignty: whilst we mean by it, the one living and true God of the Bible, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme, intelligent, self-existent, eternal Creator, of infinite justice, holiness, goodness, and truth, who has given us his law, and when we had broken it, his gospel in his

only Son our Lord ; who will judge us at the last day, and who is jealous of his glory, admits of no rival, no images, no inferior deities together with himself ; but will be worshipped alone, and, as a “ Spirit, in spirit and in truth.”

They say, “ We cannot be called on to profess Christ, till we are convinced of the truth of his religion”—forgetting that we call on them, if they are not prepared fully to profess Christ, yet to follow honestly the light as it opens on their minds ; not to be ashamed of those convictions which will, if faithfully obeyed, lead to Christ ; not to conceal that persuasion of the sin and folly of idolatry and imposture, which lurks in their hearts.

They say, “ We dread the opposition of our families and friends”—forgetting that this is to plead the very danger which drew out the warning of the text. This is to renounce the very self-denial, the very cross, the very loss of this world’s advantages and favours, which our Lord enjoins as indispensable to the profession of his religion.

But this leads us to consider,

## II. *The guilt and sin of being ashamed of Christ and his words.*

1. For it is *disobedience to His express command*. The warning of the text implies the correspondent duty of confessing Christ before men. “ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” is the statement of the gospel proclamation. “ If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou

shalt be saved ; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

2. *It is taking part with Christ's enemies.* " He that is not with me, is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." " No man can serve two masters." To be ashamed of Christ is to join Satan in heart, to unite with the world which is " at enmity with God," to go over into the adversary's camp, to submit to that very yoke of sin which Christ died to break, deliberately to perpetrate that which God most expressly abhors.

3. *It robs Almighty God of his glory in the unspeakable mercies of redemption.* He sent his only-begotten Son into the world for his own glory. He gave him a sacrifice for sinners for his glory. He calls men by his grace, that they may " live no longer to themselves, but to him that died for them and rose again. He bids them confess his name and salvation openly before men, that " they may glorify God in the day of visitation." He commands them " whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God." God is jealous of his name ; it must not be blasphemed. Would a father be indifferent to a son's neglect of all the reverence and honour due to him, and who was ashamed of owning him before others, and lurked amongst his enemies ? Would a sovereign think little of the disloyalty of a subject who was ashamed of his allegiance, and transferred his respect and obedience to a base usurper ? Would a bridegroom be satisfied if his bride aimed not at pleasing and honoring him, but was ashamed of his

name, and bestowed attentions on others rather than himself?

4. It *springs from ingratitude, inconsistency, and treachery of heart to Christ*. For has Christ laid aside his glory and taken upon him our nature, and lived and died for us; and is the only return we make a cowardly fear of confessing him before men? What, did he expire upon the summit of Calvary for us, and will we not bear the lightest cross, for him? What, did he “endure the cross, and despise the shame” for our salvation, and shall we shrink from a momentary shame and reproach in return? What, did he empty and humble himself for us; did he undergo unutterable sorrow; did he venture all on our account; did he become a curse for our redemption; and are we ashamed of him who hath done all this for us?

But what inconsistency as well as ingratitude is there in all this! Did he not tell us when we first entered upon his religion, that we must confess his name before men, that we must become “new creatures,” that we must “deny ourselves,” that we must “come out from the world and be separate, and not touch the unclean thing;” that “whosoever would save his life should lose it, but whosoever should lose his life for his sake, the same should save it;” that “he that loved father or mother more than him, was not worthy of him; that he that loved son or daughter, or wife or brother, or lands, or even his own life, more than him, was not worthy of him?” What inconsistency, then, in now shrinking from the first appearance of the reproach and difficulties before announced to us.

And what treachery also! For did he not leave you in the world to sustain his cause, to bear witness to his grace, to vindicate his religion, and to preserve your fidelity, as the servants to whom his talents were entrusted during his personal absence; and are you now betraying him, like Judas, to his enemies, and flying from him, to join the world of deserters and foes?

5. But the guilt is inconceivably augmented by the consideration of *the injury it does to the souls of others*. No man is without influence. No man stands absolutely alone. Wife, children, friends, acquaintance, the circle in which we move, in civil or military life, are affected by our conduct and principles. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Because "hand joineth in hand," men conclude they shall "go unpunished." "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." He therefore that is "ashamed of Christ and his word before a wicked and adulterous generation," does all he can to ruin the souls of others. He not only fails to save them by his doctrine, his example, his prayers, his willingness to take up his cross and suffer for Christ; but he does just the contrary. The husband forces the wife into the worldly compliances which her conscience condemns. The mother plunges her daughter, like Herodias, into scenes of display and temptation. The brother urges his brother, and the friend his friend, down the vortex of folly. The next age is brought up under these schoolmasters of iniquity. The tide and flow of the gospel is stopped; shame of Christ dams up the current; the young are discouraged from professing truth and acting upon it; the timid

are alarmed ; the inquiring are misled ; the tender in conscience are plunged into unheard of embarrassments.

6. It is *the first step to apostacy from Christ*. The way of sin is down-hill. No man knows whither he shall be led, when he once enters on the deceitful declivity. When we are on Satan's ground, there is a spell comes over us, which blinds the understanding, saps the firmest principles, debauches the will, and perverts the practical decisions of the judgment. To be ashamed of Christ is already apostacy of heart. The stifling and extinguishing of our convictions follow. Prayer is soon distasteful. Worldly habits are engendered. Time, money, temper, influence fall in the struggle. The Bible is not read with devotion ; family worship languishes. A form of godliness is substituted for the power. There is a name to live, but the heart is dead ; former impressions, former knowledge, former vows are forgotten. We were in our Baptism " signed with the sign of the cross, that hereafter we should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, but manfully fight under his banners against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives' end." But we are now too wise for this. We wipe the sign of the cross from our forehead. We steal over to the banners of Christ's adversaries. We insensibly sink into a lifeless insensibility of conscience and heart.

And what shall I then say,

III. *Of the fearful consequences of being ashamed of Christ?* Hear the thrilling warning : " Whosoever

shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

For there is a day coming, when Christ, and the cause in which he is engaged, will appear as bright and illustrious, as it now appears mean and contemptible. The darkness and confusion of the false judgments of this world will soon be gone by; and the realities of eternity, the relative importance of body and soul, of this world and another, of truth and error, will shine out in their true proportion and irresistible evidence. The question will soon be decided. The point simply will be, whether we were ashamed of Christ in his humiliation; or whether we denied ourselves, and bore a momentary reproach in confessing him before men, that he might acknowledge us as his faithful people when he "came in his own glory, and his Father's, with the holy angels."

"For, lo, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." Lo, "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels—when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. Then will he sit on the throne of his glory...and from his face the earth and the heaven will flee away, and there shall no place be found for them. And the dead small and great shall stand before God; and the books shall be opened...and the dead shall be judged out of the things written in the books according to their works. And the sea shall give up the dead which are in it; and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them; and

they shall be judged every man according to their works."

At that dread season—when none but Christ can help us; when friends and families cannot help; when names and professions cannot help; when talents and reputation cannot help; when wealth and power cannot help—when this fitful life is over, and all its pleasures and amusements and maxims and seductions are passed as a feverish dream, and when nothing remains but responsibility, nothing but God and the soul, nothing but the final judgment; then will Christ be ashamed of those who have, in this scene of probation, allowed themselves to be ashamed of him and his words. Then will he be ashamed of those in that world where he is eternally adored, who have been ashamed of him in this world, where he was despised and scorned. Then will he disown them in the day of his triumph, who disowned him in the day of his humiliation. Then will he refuse to share his crown with those who were not willing to share with him in his cross. Then will those who have followed him on earth, and suffered for his sake, and confessed his cause, "shine forth as the brightness of the firmament; "whilst those who were ashamed of him and his words because of an adulterous and sinful generation, will "rise to shame and everlasting contempt."

*But it is not yet too late.* We are still on mercy's ground. The judgment, as to us, is not yet set, nor the books opened. The text stands as yet only as a warning to us, as it did to those to whom it was addressed. It is still put to our choice. We may yet begin



to confess Christ before men. We may yet repent of our false shame. We may yet take up the cross and follow Jesus. We may yet venture all, even life itself, rather than any longer deny our Lord. We may yet say to ourselves in the words of Christ, "What shall I be profited, if I shall gain the whole world and lose my own soul, and what shall I give in exchange for my soul?"

*It is one office of the ministers of religion to assist in this holy resolve; to win over the doubtful, the convinced, the wavering to the decisive step which unites them to Christ. We come to make a future world present to you. We come to invite you to act now, as you would wish to have acted, when the august approach of the Judge of all shall burst upon your view. We come to shake this world from its sleepy and dreamy Christianity by the thunders of another.*

For, as Christ will be ashamed of those who are ashamed here of his cross, so those who confess him now before men, *he will confess before his Father and the holy angels*; he will select and single them out; he will acknowledge their relation to himself; he will bring forward their fruits of love and holiness as evidences of their faith; he will say to them on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world."

Confess then your Saviour, take up his blessed name, bind the reproach of Christ close to your bosom, as your glory and your joy.

Let the native convert, the formal Christian, the hesitating professor, act upon the voice and dictate of

conscience. Let him delay and trifle no longer. Let him dread to stifle those movements of truth and of the Holy Spirit, which, if again extinguished, may never return; let him come out from the Moham-medan or Hindoo or professedly Christian world, and take his lot with the faithful followers of Christ. Let him imitate the boldness of all classes of people around him, and act as consistently for Christ, as they do for their false devotion, or earthly objects. What Hindoo is ashamed of his religion? What Mo-hammedan conceals his belief? What soldier disowns his captain? What captive his deliverer? What disciple his master? What subject his prince?

Let him act, then, in Christianity, as all other men do as to their respective creeds, or pursuits, or lines of ordinary duty and attachment.

And to this end, two things are essential; the one, *open reverence for the means of confessing Christ*; such as the blessed Sabbath, the public worship of God, the preaching of his word, the reading and meditating on the inspired Scriptures; the sacraments; private prayer; the communion and society of the righteous. And in this view, steady adherence to the pastors and formularies and discipline of our Church, in which he has been called to the knowledge of the gospel, is most important, in opposition to a fickle generalizing of all creeds and Churches, so fashionable in the present day.

The other thing is, *fervent prayer for the holy Spirit of life and grace*, which will feed the root of religion beneath the soil, pour in the tide of spiritual life

and feeling and love and gratitude to Christ, from which all true confession of him springs; and which, whilst it is vigorous within, will never allow us to go out of our closet to deny the Saviour with whom we have there been in communion. His internal "unction teaches us all things."

This power of the Holy Ghost carries us over the opposition of men, endears reproaches and losses for Christ's sake, and enables us "to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." The Thessalonians "received the word with much affliction," but still with "joy in the Holy Ghost." Whilst, on the other hand, "no man can say," and continue in the profession implied, "that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." And it was therefore, with this promise of the Comforter that our Lord left the world, and that all his disciples have successively conquered it. "Behold the hour cometh," said our Lord, at the moment of his departure, "yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

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## SERMON XXIII.

## 2 CORINTHIANS i. 3—5.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

THE open profession of faith in Christ, to which we have lately called your attention, cannot be unattended with many peculiar difficulties and sorrows. The general beneficial tendency of Christianity will remarkably appear in the manner in which consolation is provided for these emergencies. For the goodness and wisdom of God may be traced, not only in the highest ultimate ends to which these afflictions are made subservient, but also in many intermediate and subordinate purposes. For as sympathy and mutual love are amongst our most difficult and yet most important duties; so, to convey consolation to the injured and distressed, through the medium of the consolations afforded to their pastors in like circumstances, must have an eminently beneficial tendency, by creating in each a larger measure of that disinterested fellow-feeling, by which the Christian morality heals the irritated passions of a distracted world; and by

uniting with it, in the highest degree. that fortitude and magnanimity and hope of ultimate success, which, when thus conjoined, constitute the highest felicity of which our nature is capable.

Thus St. Paul in the passage of which the words of the text are the commencement, wishing to animate the Corinthian converts to bear up courageously under persecution, bursts forth into a sublime strain of gratitude to God for having afforded him adequate consolation under his own various troubles, in order that he might be better enabled to convey similar comfort to them. "Blessed be God," says this great apostle, "even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which ye also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." <sup>1</sup>

There is no one, on reading this song of triumph, but would imagine that the apostle was then at least in a state of peace and tranquillity; with a breathing-time which permitted him to reflect at his ease on past occurrences. But not so; he wrote these words

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 3---7.

when persecuted on all hands, when making his way through difficulties, when just escaped from “so great a death,” that the sentence of it impended still; and when, in short, he had nothing to trust to but “God who raiseth the dead.” This magnanimous language is for the consolation of his converts. His sorrows and his joys are appointed him, as channels of his apostolic usefulness amongst his flocks. Their consolation and salvation were bound up in his; and this is the consideration which fills him with the most exalted joy.

The proposition then, which, I shall endeavour to illustrate from this fine passage, is, That God consoles his faithful people under the sufferings they have to endure for Christ, by means of the comfort afforded in like cases to ministers.

In considering which, we must notice, the Tribulations here referred to; the Consolation which Almighty God pours in through the channel of ministers; and the Gratitude due to Him for this appointment.

I. *The tribulations themselves here referred to* are those which St. Paul and his Corinthian converts were called to endure, for the sake of Christ and the gospel.

What a history of afflictions is that of St. Paul. “We would not have you ignorant, brethren,” he says, in the verse following those I have read, “of our trouble which came to us in Asia; that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in our-

selves, but in God which raiseth the dead." The apostle is in all probability alluding to the tumult raised at Ephesus by Demetrius and his craftsmen, ' when the populace were inflamed with wrath, the whole city was filled with confusion, and Paul with difficulty restrained by his friends from entering in, and addressing the maddened crowd, who for two hours continued shouting in the amphitheatre, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." His description is the calm recollection of a mind emerged from the confusion of instant danger; and is marked with that devotion and solemnity of thought which follows a great deliverance.' He was then indeed "pressed out of measure, beyond strength," by inward disquietude about the state of the Churches, concurring with these external dangers, so that his burden was insupportable by any strength which he had previously possessed; and he was led almost to despair of being any longer preserved in life to execute his plans of usefulness. He even considered himself as a condemned person, whose doom was inevitable, and who carried about with him "the sentence" of the judge. Nor, indeed, had he any method of escape by his own contrivance or effort, or by any confidence in himself; but was compelled to cast himself unreservedly on the Almighty power of "Him who raiseth the dead;" from the unspeakable blessedness of which, no human cruelty could debar him.

This tumult, though the most severe, was yet only a specimen of the holy apostle's sufferings for the sake of Christ. Read the account in the Acts, filled up

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix.

<sup>2</sup> Paley.

with those details of his afflictions which the boasts of the false apostles compelled him to make in his Epistles. See how “the sufferings of Christ abounded in him;” rose high; swelled as a river; came up, so to speak, to his throat; overwhelmed and bore him away. There never was any sufferer, except the blessed Jesus himself, who endured so many kinds of sorrow; who was so tossed from wave to wave; who escaped one calamity that he might be plunged into another; who was exposed to afflictions all sorts of ways, in every place, from all descriptions of enemies, and throughout the whole course of a long ministry, till he closed the tragical scene under the sword of the executioner—sa St. Paul.

2. *Nor were his converts exempt from a measure of the same tribulations.* They also were “in trouble;” “the sufferings of Christ abounded in them;” they “endured the same sufferings which he also suffered;” they were “partakers with him” in them. In so proud, luxurious, and profligate a city as Corinth, proverbial throughout Greece for its corrupt morals as well as for its schools of science, philosophy, and rhetorical eloquence, the native convert must have had a fiery trial to endure from the combined hostility of Jew and Gentile. The same bigotry and indignation which pursued the apostle would follow also his new disciples, in the details of social and domestic life. The distractions also of heretics denying the faith of the Resurrection, and endeavouring to sap the authority of the blessed apostle, must have augmented the difficulties of their position. Whilst the fearful disorders in their own community; the spirit of litigation; the questions



concerning marriage, and remaining with an unbelieving partner, or not ; the party-spirit ; the profane contempt of some in celebrating the Holy Supper of the Lord ; and the gross vices into which others fell, <sup>1</sup> must have presented temptations of the most complicated nature.

These were “ the sufferings of Christ ;” borne for his sake, incurred in his cause, and felt by the whole body of the faithful, as members in Christ the divine Head. Sufferings these, differing from the common classes of afflictions, which arise from our mortal nature, from the ordinary assaults of the world, Satan, and the flesh, and from the conflict with indwelling sin within and around us.

3. *Need I say how much all this resembles that of the native convert now, except as the protecting arm of a Christian government interposes between the hostility of idolatrous and superstitious multitudes and their victim. The same infuriate and blind tumults would otherwise be excited now by those who are the successors, as it were, of Demetrius and his craftsmen, as were raised against the apostle and his converts. The bitterness and bigotry are not less ; the pride of caste may probably be greater ; the parent is not less disposed to abuse his authority over his child ; the family are equally ready to prevent what they consider the disgrace of their wide domestic circle ; the priesthood are ever at hand to stimulate the prejudices already too prompt to inflame. Cases are not wanting of cruelty and force being employed to crush the rising faith in Christianity. It is equally*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. *passim*.

true now, as it was in the time of our Lord, that the gospel incidentally occasions divisions, when those who would obey, however meekly, its peaceful invitations, are forcibly impeded by those around them : “ Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth ? I tell you, nay ; but rather division : for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father ; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother ; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.”

4. But in these sufferings for Christ *the ministers of religion and its missionaries in foreign lands will ever have to take the lead.* As the feet of the priests who bare the ark were first dipped in Jordan, and then those of the people ; so the sufferings of St. Paul and the rest of the apostles led the way in the afflictions of the first Christian Churches. And so in every age, the pastors and the shepherds go on in the path of sorrow before their flocks. Whenever persecutions arise in spots where no arm of law can penetrate, or in a manner which just evades the letter of statutes, the missionary has ever been the first to suffer.

5. But the sufferings of Christ extend further ; they comprehend *all the various afflictions of pastors and flocks in the most tranquil and established state of Christian usages and society*, so far as they arise for Christ’s sake. In this limited sense trials never cease. They render the road which leadeth to life ever nar-

row. They constitute the daily cross which we have to sustain in following Christ. In these more light afflictions, as well as in the heavier ones of which we have been speaking, the minister and flock share the same lot, descend into the like valleys of humiliation, and partake of the same sufferings; which sometimes also “abound” and rise high and overflow. There are places and seasons when clamour and reproach are doubled, when some division of truth is impugned and decried; when dangerous and heretical opinions fall in with the spirit of the age; and charges of fanaticism, overstatement, and folly are inflamed to contempt and outrage.

Scandals, also, at times increase the tribulation; by false brethren, by the relapses of some into sin and the world, into error and heresy, into disorders, and party-spirit, political heat mingled unnaturally with religion, the scorn of intellectual pride directed against the first principles of revelation.

Seasons also arrive, when because “iniquity abounds, the love of many waxeth cold;” when “a name to live” is substituted for spiritual life; and “the form” of knowledge and evangelical doctrine is put instead of “the power.”

Such, then, are the common sufferings of Christ, in which pastors and flocks, whether in the apostolic age or our own, share. A foundation is here laid for tender sympathy and fellow-feeling; ministerial relations and duties are steeped in sorrow; the attention and obedience of the people are softened and mollified by affliction and tears. But this is only to prepare for a yet more interior cement of affection and kindness, as we shall see, whilst we consider,

II. *The consolation which Almighty God is pleased to pour in, through the channel of ministers—*“who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

St. Paul was himself first sustained and consoled. He was “comforted in all his tribulations.” The “so great death” which threatened him, did not fall. God delivered him from it; and was still continually delivering him; in whom he further trusted that he would yet deliver, as future emergencies arose. At this very city of Corinth, to which he is addressing the Epistle from which the text is taken, what consolations did he receive; “Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee;” on which encouragement he “continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.” On previous occasions also he had not been left destitute. At Lystra when the disciples stood around, supposing him to have been dead, we see him rising up, and after a short visit to Derbe, returning to the very spot where he had been stoned, “to confirm the souls of the disciples, and exhort them to continue in the faith.” And when he was soon after cast into prison at Philippi, in company with Silas, he was engaged in “praying and singing praises to God at midnight, so that the prisoners heard them.” And when, at a later period, “forty men bound themselves with a great oath that they would not eat nor drink till

they had slain him; the Lord did not leave him comfortless; but their lying in wait was discovered to him; and he was conveyed safely to Cæsarea, in conformity with the assurance given him by a night vision, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou also bear witness at Rome." And in one of his very last struggles, when he appeared before Nero, and "no man stood by him, but all men, especially they of Asia, forsook him," did not "the Lord stand by him and strengthen him, that by him the preaching might be fully known; so that he was delivered from the mouth of the lion?"

Such was the solid comfort, the inward courage, the fortitude and self-possession with which the apostle was sustained in all his tribulations. For the word "comfort" here, imports that kind of consolation by which the mind of man is rescued, alleviated, raised up and strengthened against sorrow. The afflictions were not, indeed, removed; but he was cheered and animated to bear up under them. There was light and joy within his heart, whilst all was dark without. He possessed his soul in patience. The peace of God garrisoned and guarded his heart and mind, in the midst of assaults the most violent and threatening.

2. And this consolation was vouchsafed not for his own sake only, but with the express design that *he might be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, with the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God.* The apostle's consolations were to be the channel through which Almighty God poured the tide of comfort into the hearts of the Corinthian flock. He

could not have been able to communicate consolation with such tenderness and suitableness, if he had not himself passed through the same afflictions with those whom he addressed.

The difficulty of animating the dejected heart often arises from its thinking that no one can really enter its case: "My soul is cast down within me," saith the destitute Christian, "I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes." "Lover and friend hast thou put away from me, and my acquaintance into darkness." The attempts of ministers and friends to console the mind are cold and inefficient, unless they have been themselves in similar circumstances, and can speak of comforts, not as matters of doctrine and theory merely, but of experience and actual relief in their own cases. The language of the apostle is emphatical, "that we may *be able* to comfort them that are in any trouble, with the comfort wherewith *we ourselves* are comforted of God;" as if his power of administering consolation depended on the sympathy which his own circumstances had taught him to feel.' Thus we read even of our blessed Saviour, that "he is not an high priest, that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin." And the end in view is thus given "For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

3. The *Corinthians had accordingly drunk at the stream conveyed to them through the apostle as a channel*; "our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." All the afflictions, indeed,

suffered by our Lord and his faithful people are, in a sense, one and the same mass and community of woe, which is going on increasing continually, till all the destined accumulation is accomplished, and the last suffering is endured. "I fill up," says the apostle, "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, for his body's sake, which is the Church."

When the Corinthians, then, saw St. Paul strenuously bearing up underneath heavier afflictions than any they had to endure, when they heard of his unsubdued mind, when they read his epistles to their own and other Churches, full of holy confidence in the goodness of his cause, and encouraging the converts to "take joyfully the spoiling of their goods;" when they perceived especially, that the tumult at Ephesus, and his eminent peril of life only lead him to consider himself so much the better qualified for comforting the flocks who were to follow him in the same path, they gathered courage for themselves; they caught the spirit of the Captain who led them on; they felt assured of the firm foundation of the faith on which they stood; and they believed that God would not desert them, whilst he sustained so triumphantly their father, their leader, their guide.

4. *It is thus in the Churches now, whether of Native, or of established Christian bodies.* God consoles by the means of the consolation of ministers and missionaries, of parents and aged disciples, of masters and teachers in Israel, well experienced in the school of trouble. He consoles in a manner to honour the ministry he has established for that very purpose in his Church. He comforts, not by angels,

not by men unversed in trials, not by the invisible operations of his grace merely, not by the word of promise in Scripture, not by public and private prayers, sermons, and sacraments only; but by ministers suggesting, in a spirit of tender sympathy and with due authority, the promises of grace, leading to the portions of Scripture most suitable to each case, applying sermons and sacraments by individual conference and exhortation, appealing to divine supports vouchsafed to themselves; and thus becoming the living channel of the consolations of Christ.

Thus like a physician he applies his remedies with all tenderness to the state of the patient, as one who has suffered similar sorrows. Thus he resembles the vapors raised from the earth to return to it in fruitful showers. And in this, as in a thousand other instances, the wisdom and mercy of God are apparent, not only in the blessings he grants, but in the channel through which he conveys them.

5. *There seems, moreover, to be a proportion between the tribulation and the support*, intimated in the words, “as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ.” The consolation appears to have been commensurate to the occasions as they arose, neither falling short nor going beyond the exigency. As afflictions abounded, correspondent strength was supplied. Thus now, sometimes our trials are slight, and we need not at that time the consolations of a state of martyrdom or imprisonment; which however we may hope to receive should the necessity arrive. It is the proportion of strength to the burden which God promises to pre-



serve. A man in his full maturity can lift more easily a weight of enormous bulk, than a child can raise one of a few pounds. And therefore it is, that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." The experiment 'we have so often made of God's consolations in proportion to our need, encourages us to trust in all future trials. "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust also that he will yet deliver." The cordials which would be fatal in one state of the patient's malady, are beneficial, yea indispensable, in another. God has mercies and consolations of different kinds, and pours them into the heart in different proportions, as the emergency in his infinite goodness and wisdom, demands.

6. It deserves remark, further, that the word "*salvation*" is here introduced by the apostle in his statement, and is joined with consolation. In some of the verses we read only of comfort; "that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble;" "our hope is stedfast, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so ye will be also of the consolation. But in an intermediate verse, "salvation" is united with it, "and whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation" ultimate and complete salvation is the end in view both in afflictions and joys; and in order to conduce to this, they both must be proportioned by infinite wisdom. They do not of themselves secure our salvation. The one tends to despair, the other only to self-confidence. But the two, when proportioned aright, and impregnated with

divine grace, acquire new properties, and essentially advance our salvation. "I know," says our apostle of the afflictions springing from those who preached Christ even of envy and strife, "that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." We thus "are saved by hope" of divine succour; and with this "hope of salvation" as our "helmet," we press on to final victory.

7. And thus *all the events of ministers' lives are made subservient to the salvation*, as well as comfort of their flocks. And so, in their measure, are the lives of advanced Christians with regard to their younger friends and brethren. Christianity is communicative of blessings. "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself;" but, "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." Ministers are the channels of grace. Their afflictions and joys, their trials and deliverances, their journeys and designs, their removals and stations of labours, their sicknesses and recoveries, their lives and deaths, are ordered by inscrutable wisdom for the good of others. Each turn of events was endeared to the apostle by the conviction of the benefits that would be reflected upon others; "and whether we be afflicted it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual"—produces its virtue and effect—"by the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." A good minister, pastor, bishop, desires to appropriate nothing to himself. He knows that he receives nothing from God but for the sake

of others. In every affliction and every consolation, in every loss of children or friends, in every suffering for Christ, in every separation from country and family, in every comfort received by the communion of his brethren, he knows that God has a view, not to his own benefit chiefly, but to the welfare and salvation of others. The captain must acquire experience, before he can animate his troops. The physician must heal himself. The ambassador must be reconciled to his prince himself, before he can plead aright in the word of reconciliation intrusted to him.

8. *Ministers indeed require every affliction and consolation for their proper support and salvation.* They are men of like passions with others. They are exposed to imminent danger by pride, the hurry of affairs, public and official familiarity with religion and religious topics, the very affection and sympathy of their flocks. Discipline, double discipline is necessary for their own safety, and that the glory of all success may be attributed to its proper author. But besides this, they are to be the channels of blessings to others, and therefore are placed under a series of dispensations with this particular view. In sending fruitful clouds, God has an eye, not to their enclosures merely, but to all the lands and fields around. What a blessed tendency in Christianity does this train of thought open !

Let us proceed then to consider,

III. *The gratitude due to Almighty God for this appointment.*

1. The whole passage is a burst of thanksgiving. Five verses of praise are poured out by the apostle,

before the trouble which came to him in Asia, and his deliverance from it, which gave occasion to the hymn, is even introduced. "Blessed be God," exclaims the apostle, "even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us, &c." What a tide of consolation must have flowed into his own heart, to make him pause at the commencement of his narrative, to pronounce this act of solemn gratitude to God, to whom he owed, as he knew, all his own support, and all the ability of conveying it, as a channel, to his flocks.

2. *Observe the titles here ascribed to the adorable God:* "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" not "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" only, but "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who had "fulfilled the promises made unto the fathers, and remembered his holy covenant." Not the God of the Deist, or the Socinian, or the Mussulman, but the God of Revelation; the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who had "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

But this is not all. He is also "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." Not merely the God of patience, the God of peace, the God of hope; but, with an exuberance of grateful feeling, "the Father of mercies;" not mercy but mercies in all their variety and fulness—and the Father of them, not the God only, to note more clearly his natural inclination and propensity to mercy, as a "Father who pitieth his own children." And "the God of all comfort," in whom

all consolations are stored up, whose presence maketh joy, who is the one abundant ever-flowing spring of comfort to his faithful people, who can give comfort, all comfort, all degrees and all kinds of it, and who places his glory and his name in dispensing it. „

No where, perhaps, in the whole compass of Scripture have we so rich and emphatic a description of the goodness of God, as in the language here uttered by the apostle from the depths of calamity, and adapted to the consolation of the dejected and persecuted Corinthian Church.

3. To this God, then, reconciled in Christ Jesus, and become through him the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, *the apostle chaunts his hymn of praise*, in order that Almighty God might have the glory due unto his name, and that the Corinthians might know whence the stream of comfort flowed, what was the springhead of every blessing, and why he was so confident that “as they had been partakers of the sufferings of Christ, so they would be also of the consolation.”

We should delight in tracing out the goodness of God in his fixing the scenes of the duties of ministers, appointing their trials, sanctifying each event, pouring in the needful support, enabling them to console others, making all occurrences in their own lives and those of their flocks work together for their mutual good.

It is a wise and merciful dispensation of God thus to bind all his Church together in the bonds of sympathy and love. Their respective griefs and consolations, their intercessions and thanksgivings, their succours and woes abound in unutterable praise and glory,

in the event, to the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort."

But to conclude. What a magnanimity, then, does this view of Christianity inspire, united with tender sympathy, and resulting in the most copious sources of felicity of which our nature is capable—these are the reflections which press upon the mind after such a subject, and which demonstrate the blessed tendencies of our religion.

*For what true magnanimity doth our subject teach.* It calls us to bear up under troubles, however complicated or severe. It invites us to all that train of hardships, reproaches, difficulties, sorrows by which greatness of mind is acquired and manifested. It bids us not to look for exemption from great trials, but for strength and consolation to sustain them. It commands us to be of good courage, because in them we are not only fulfilling our own duty and advancing our own salvation, but are becoming more capable of consoling others. To suffer in a great cause, is accounted noble even by the men of this world; but to suffer in a cause so pre-eminently great as that of Christianity, and in which we are benefiting others as well as ourselves, is the purest magnanimity.

Let the warrior, the statesman, the philosopher, the philanthropist hide their heads before the more exalted greatness of mind apparent in the minister, the missionary, the humblest native convert of the Christian faith. The world calls rashness, animal courage, confidence in natural talents, ambition of discovery, and conquest, by the name of glory—because the world

knows of no higher pursuits. But real magnanimity is best seen in him, who, like the apostles, unapplauded and unnoticed, yea, despised and resisted by the world, and having no earthly objects to serve, endures firmly the conflict which Christ calls him to sustain, relying on invisible aid, and rejoicing to be the means of consoling others at the expense of any sufferings or privations to himself.

And where is the least want of magnanimity in the apostle? Where any shrinking from suffering? Where is his distrust of his cause? Where his perturbation under the calamities, which, if he were a deceiver, must have sapped his spirit? No; his magnanimity is founded on a just confidence in the truth of his doctrine, and the mighty aid of Him who commissioned him to proclaim it.

It is thus in the present day. The internal magnanimity of faith sheds a holy calmness over the mind of the minister of Christ, especially in heathen lands, notwithstanding all discouragements and sorrows. He complains not, he retreats not; but still presses onward at the head of the converts and flocks to whom he is to be the channel of consolation, persuaded that "nothing shall separate him from the love of Christ; neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword. Nay, that in all these things he shall be more than a conqueror through him that hath loved him."

*But what a soft sympathising tenderness is also united in the spirit of the Christian sufferer. The text breathes not only magnanimity, but tenderness, con-*

sideration for the sorrows of others. Fortitude and greatness of mind, if they stand alone, soon degenerate into obduracy and obstinacy. But the magnanimity of St. Paul is connected with humility, fellow-feeling for others, tears of sympathy. It is a magnanimity, not of nature, but of grace; it unites not only all the strong, but all the tender passions of the heart. It sustains with the fortitude of a hero, and compassionates with the pity of a parent.

We do not enough cultivate, perhaps, this affection between the pastor and his flock. Great success in missions and in the ministry generally, more depends on this temper of love and sympathy, than on anything else; supposing always there is faithfulness to truth in the doctrine delivered. The most remarkable instances of eminent pastors in both departments, have been found in men of affectionate, humble, tender hearts, who have possessed true magnanimity as the substratum of their character, and evangelical light and truth as the guide of their exertions.

In this country, indeed, our first want is that of more ministers themselves—more men of God, more heralds of Christ, within our Christian communities and in our mission churches. The importance of that ministry which God makes the channel of life and consolation to souls, cannot be fully conceived. Nor can the prayers and supplications of Christians be directed to the Lord of the harvest with too much fervor, that he would be pleased to send forth more labourers into his harvest.

Our next want is, that those of us who are in the field of labour may be united with a more touching



sympathy with our flocks, and enter more into the spirit of the apostle.

For this union of magnanimity with tenderness *ensures the largest measure of real satisfaction and happiness of which our nature in this imperfect state is capable.* We have joy in our prospect, and support in our pursuit. Notwithstanding all afflictions, the hymn of praise swells our hearts. We feel satisfied, tranquil, happy in our object, not indeed an unmixed satisfaction, or unalloyed happiness ; but a satisfaction and happiness which outweigh all opposite considerations, which preponderate, which bring in by anticipation much of final triumph, and shed a glow of peace and benevolent satisfaction in the sense of the communication of consolation to others, at present.

Happiness-in such a creature as man, and under such circumstances as man is in, is not to be obtained in any other way. It cannot result from worldly ease, tranquillity, indifference ; it cannot flow from sinful passions and pursuits, however varied. Happiness, from the very nature of the case, must stand connected with all the interests temporal and eternal of man as a responsible being. When philosophers tell us that happiness is the effect of the great passions excited in a worthy pursuit and crowned with success, they speak truly, if they had only an adequate knowledge of what answers these conditions. Christianity alone meets them ; and thus exhibits that strong and determined tendency to promote the highest interests of man which we have been illustrating in these discourses. Happiness is, in truth, the result of great passions engaged in a worthy pursuit, and crowned with success ; but no pur-

suit is worthy of the name, but the search “after glory and honour and immortality” in Christ Jesus—no pursuit is worthy of the name, but that of the glory of God in our own salvation and in the advancing the good of our fellow creatures. No other pursuit can moderate, whilst it excites the passions; purify and guide, whilst it raises all the emotions of our nature to the utmost effort. No other pursuit also can pretend to crown us with success, permanent, exalted, adequate to the outlay of time and effort. Every other pursuit is deceitful and temporary in its result, as it is subordinate in its object, and vain and momentary in its best success. The Christian, amidst all his obscurity and affliction, is the truly great and benevolent and happy character, as he unites the noblest object of pursuit with the constant stimulus of the most lofty passions, the largest effusions of consolation on his fellow Christians, and the prospect of an eternal and imperishable crown of glory to reward and console him at last.

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## SERMON XXIV.

### REVELATION iii. 7—8.

And to the Angel of the Church of Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: For thou hast a little strength, and has kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

AFTER considering the preceding topics connected with the propagation of the Gospel, we proceed to the case, which has not yet specifically come before us of a feeble but faithful Church sustained by the promise of Christ. For the Church of Christ in India, like that of Philadelphia, to which the words of the text were addressed, has but "little strength." The condescending encouragement, therefore, given by our Lord to this feeble Asiatic Church of old, is peculiarly appropriate to ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This discourse was delivered in the Church of St. James, Delhi, November 21, 1836, on the occasion of the consecration of that edifice. The Introduction then, stood thus, The consecration of this noble building for the public worship of Almighty God, in the imperial city of Delhi, and under the remarkable circumstances which have attended its erection, is no inconsi-

This is then our subject, in considering which three things may naturally be asked; What are the titles and character which our Lord assumes in giving the encouragement; What the circumstances of those to whom it is addressed; and, What the particulars of the promise on which it rests. The reply to the first question will present to us the names and offices of the Divine Saviour; that to the second will point out the feebleness, yet fidelity of Churches like that of Philadelphia; whilst the answer to the third will assure us of the approbation, favour, and protection of Christ.

1. In considering *the names and offices of the Divine Saviour*, as we find them in the text, we shall have to notice the glorious titles themselves, his authority in the Church connected with them, and his manner of executing his high office.

1. *His glorious titles and qualities* are thus briefly expressed; "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true;" that is, he that claims perfect holiness and invariable truth as necessary and essential to his nature; he that is emphatically, and in a manner which no mere creature can pretend to, "the holy One and the true One." These are attributes exclusively appertaining to the one infinite and self-existing Jehovah. If our

derable event. The Church of Christ in India, like that of Philadelphia, to which the words of our text were addressed, has but "little strength." Every accession therefore, to the number of her ministers, every increase to her sacred places for the open profession of the name of Christ, is an important step, is a new means of strength and grace, is opening before her another "door," that she may enter on new fields of labour, honour, and usefulness.

Lord were not God as well as man, such a claim would be presumptuous and blasphemous in the highest degree. No patriarch, no prophet, no evangelist, no apostle ever set up such a pretence. No one but "the only-begotten of the Father," in whom dwelleth "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," thus speaks. He is essential holiness and truth. The prophet of old, accordingly, had termed him, THE HOLY ONE, "Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption." And the angel, announcing his incarnation to the virgin, "Therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

In addressing a feeble but pure Church, like that of Philadelphia, this is the especial title which our Lord assumes. He delights in holiness and truth. He cannot endure either iniquity or falsehood. He is holy in his nature, and therefore cannot but be true to his word. His salvation is full of holiness and truth. His death upon the Cross was to vindicate the holiness of the divine law and government, and assert the truth of the divine sanctions. His gospel teaches, promotes, requires holiness. His Holy Spirit infuses it into the heart. Christ is infinitely holy to punish all individuals and Churches that depart from his ways; and he is infinitely true to fulfil all his promises to those who "keep his word, and do not deny his name."

These divine properties are, therefore, a source of encouragement. Men change, ministers change, prevalent opinions change, degrees of strength in Churches and individuals change, but the rule of Christ's judgment changes not, truth and holiness

change not, the Gospel changes not ; because Christ, the author of them, is “ He that is holy, and he that is true ;” “ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

2. Our Lord’s *authority and office* are next to be noted, “ He that hath the key of David ;” alluding to the Eastern custom of placing a key on the shoulders of princes or nobles when entering upon their office. So the prophet, predicting the reign of Messiah, says, “ the government shall be upon his shoulder ;” and speaking of Eliakim, as a type of that Messiah, “ the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder.”

Accordingly, “ the Lord God gave unto him,” at his incarnation, “ the throne of his father David, that he might reign over the house of Jacob for ever ;” and the apostle, after his resurrection, thus announced his dominion, “ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” And St. Peter, describing his actual glory and authority, says, “ Who is gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God ; angels and principalities and powers, being made subject unto Him.”

Let this, then, sustain the fainting Churches in the days of sorrow, that Christ hath “ the key of David,” is heir of all things, has “ all power given him in heaven and earth,” and must “ reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet,” and hath accomplished all the purposes of holiness and truth in his great redemption.

3. But *the manner in which our Lord executes his office* agrees with the description of his authority

and of his divine attributes, “ He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth;” words which, carrying on the allusion of the key placed on the shoulder of official persons, describe him as opening or shutting the portals of the regal abode with uncontrollable authority. If the key be applied by him and the door thrown open, those invited enter; but if it be closed, there is no admission. There is accordingly a divine efficacy in Christ’s acts as Mediator. When he opens the door of grace, mercy, opportunity, prosperity to feeble Churches, none can shut; when he shuts, none can open. The exercise of his office is, like himself, sovereign and divine. It is a supreme and irresistible dominion which no man can obstruct. And this in whatever view we consider it.

If we apply it to *the opening the gate of mercy to the individual penitent*, and to the closing the door of pardon and acceptance to the obstinate and rebellious, “ he openeth and no man shutteth; and he shutteth, and no man openeth.” Christ unfolds the door of admission into the visible Church, according to the terms of salvation laid down in his gospel, and he also shuts it. He gave to his apostles, when upon earth, the ministerial and declarative office of assuring all true penitents of remission of sins in his blood, and admitting them as guests at his holy mysteries; and of excluding the impenitent and unbelieving. “ I give unto thee,” said our Lord, in this view, to one of his apostles in the name of the rest, “ the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven;”

and on another occasion he declared to the whole body of them, “ Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained ;” sentences which Christ, the chief shepherd, confirms in heaven, so far as the absolution or retention is duly declared. For it is he, and he alone, that authoritatively and effectively openeth the gate of pardon to all who believe in his name, and then none can shut : and it is he, and he alone—“ the holy One and true”—that shutteth it upon the impenitent, and then none can open.

Or, if we apply the words to *his opening or closing the door of heaven and the invisible world after death* ; to the admission of the righteous into the glorious inheritance prepared for them, and the shutting up of the wicked into “ outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth,” they are equally authoritative and conclusive. It is in this sense that our Lord speaks to St. John in the Apocalypse, “ I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore ; and have the keys of hell and of death”—of the invisible world, and of the grave as the entrance to it. And thus in the parable we read of our Lord’s shutting the door of heaven on the foolish virgins, notwithstanding their importunate cry for admittance ; whilst to those that were ready, he opened wide its portals, and they went in with him to the banquet.

But the words chiefly import, as I conceive, in the present connection, Christ’s supreme control over *the events of providence, in subscrvieney to the designs of his redemption*. In this sense also, which lies between and unites, as it were, the two others, our



Lord "openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." He opens the door of instruction, of faith, of utterance; he opens the gate of opportunity and usefulness to a Church or to individual Christians, and then none can shut it; no power in heaven or earth. He shuts the door to an unfaithful Church or body of Christians, or to a family or individual; and none in heaven or earth can open. He "removes the candlestick out of its place" from a declining Church, if it repent not. He quenches the star in his right hand, if the sins of a people provoke his indignation. He lights up the star again, and replaces the candlestick, when they seek his face. Events in providence obey his will. Kingdoms and states and princes rise and fall, as he opens or closes the portals of spiritual and temporal prosperity. Churches and Christians, means of grace, buildings for the decent worship of God, nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the Church, a learned and pious ministry, Christian missions and institutions of various kinds, translated copies of the Bible in all languages are multiplied and strengthened, as Christ turns the golden key, and throws wide the entrance.

When the door of utterance is thus opened, the interior work of God also advances; souls inquire after the way of salvation, converts are added to the Church, ministers and their flocks are united in love, public worship and sacraments are administered in purity and spirituality, and the body of believers have their "conversation as becometh the gospel of Christ."

This is, then, the repose of the souls of feeble Christians and ministers, under the difficulties and trials of

their position, that Christ is “the holy One and the true,” that he hath “the key of David,” that “he openeth and no man shutteth; and that he shutteth, and no man openeth.”

These names therefore and attributes of the Divine Saviour, speaking to the weak Philadelphian Church, constitute the first source of encouragement. Let us only strive to “keep Christ’s word and not deny his name,” however little our strength is, and he will apply the key of office to the golden doors, and then none can shut them; for when Christ acts, he acts independently of the will of man, and transcendently above all the power of man.

II. Let us proceed then to consider, *The circumstances and conduct of those to whom the encouragement is addressed.*

1. The Church of Philadelphia is thus described, “For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and not denied my name.” That Church had a little, and but a little, strength. She had been placed amongst great and manifold dangers. Many who professed to belong to her, were “found to be liars and of the synagogue of Satan.” She had few helpers, little external aid. Civil governments, whether Heathen or Jewish, were hostile. Her pastors and chief ministers were persecuted. The Angel or presiding minister (what we now term the Bishop, such as Timothy was amongst the numerous presbyters of Ephesus, and Titus amongst those of the hundred cities of Crete, and such as the apostles themselves, during their lives, had been in a peculiar and more exalted

sense) had probably been driven into exile. The faith and strength and patience and hope of the Church were small; and "because iniquity abounded, the love of many waxed cold." She was not vigorous, bold, and growing exceedingly in grace, and filled with the fruits of righteousness; but weak and imperfect and unstable and timid. She could but just stand her ground. Many things were wrong in her, which her pastors had not strength to set right.

Still as a Church she had kept, upon the whole, Christ's word. This word of Christ is the deposit of the faith committed to the care of the Church, to be kept by her with unvarying fidelity, and handed down from age to age. This word—which is none other than "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh,"—must be kept in all essential points, in these ways—in doctrine, in worship, in conduct.

The Church of Philadelphia *had kept the doctrine of Christ*, the truth of his proper Deity as one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, his incarnation, the atonement of his death, pardon and justification by faith in his obedience and sacrifice, the gracious operations of his Spirit in renewing and sanctifying the heart, the necessity of love to him as the constraining motive of a disinterested life, and the ascription of every thing spiritually good in us to his merciful will. Any great defection in this doctrine of Christ would have been to "deny his name."

She had also kept Christ's word *as to the public worship of Almighty God*, by sanctifying the blessed day of rest, by assembling the Church in solemn meetings, offering "supplications, prayers, interces-

sions, and giving of thanks for kings and all in authority," reading Christ's holy word to the people, administering the sacraments which he had instituted, preaching and expounding the blessed gospel, visiting the sick and afflicted, catechizing the young, ordering all things according to the constitution of Christ's Church as settled by the apostles, and being in unity and love with the Angel, or presiding minister, placed over her. Any material defection in the purity of Christian worship would have been to "deny Christ's name."

And *as to the rule of conduct*, she had also kept Christ's word, following the blessed steps of his own holy life, maintaining the perpetual obligation of the ten Commandments, and in no respects compounding for moral delinquencies by any number of outward rites and usages.

In none of these respects had the Philadelphian Church denied Christ's name, which almost all the seven Asiatic Churches had done. Ephesus had "left her first love." Sardis had "had a name to live, but was dead." Pergamos "suffered the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes, which Christ hated"—some gross corruptions probably, springing from the love of "filthy lucre," and from sins of uncleanness. Thyatira "allowed the woman Jezebel"—a false prophetess perhaps, or pretender to new Revelations—to "seduce" the flock. Laodicea was "lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot." These Churches had not kept, but had in fact denied, Christ's word and name in doctrine, or worship, or morals.

Smyrna only and Philadelphia had, though with but

little strength, yet struggled on, and retained "the word of Christ's patience and denied not his name."

Such was the state of the Church of Philadelphia, as testified not by man, but by Him who was "the holy One and the true," and who had "the key of David" to open and close at his pleasure.

2. But Churches are composed of individuals; *these remarks may be applied therefore, in a measure, to particular Christians in different ages.* We all feel what "little strength" we have to what is spiritually good. We are prompt enough for what is external, secular, worldly, sinful; but for repentance, for faith, for spiritual religion, for the love of Christ we have small power. Even under the most favourable circumstances, we are but weak and feeble to what is good.

But the scattered Christians in India are especially so. They come out most of them in extreme youth, with their religious principles not firmly settled. They are removed early from under the eye of their parents and family, and thrown into scenes of the greatest temptation; they are placed in stations, perhaps, where they have but rare occasions of attending public worship; removals to new stations after every three years, prevent an attachment between the flock and the chaplain, if there be one, being readily formed. Thus they have but little strength of Christian knowledge, faith, self-denial, prayer, courage, sympathy, in professing the name of Christ. The Sabbath comes round with few associations of sanctity; and the langor arising from the climate and from positive sickness, indispose many for the duties of public worship.

But still we are, as I trust, on the whole, keeping

Christ's word and not denying his name. This is one object of the Visitation, to "strengthen that which remains which is ready to die." We come to "hold up the feeble hands," and confirm the sinking heart of each individual Christian. We come to entreat every one of you to "keep Christ's word." We come to beg of you to do this by daily reading some portion of his inspired Scripture, by constant prayer and meditation in secret, and by availing yourselves of all opportunities for public worship and administration of his sacraments. We come to exhort you not to deny Christ's name by being ashamed of his gospel before the scoffer or sceptic, or by profaning his Sabbath which is the principal external sign of the Covenant between God and us. Nor is the consolation small which is derived from observing in different places, the kindness with which we are welcomed, and the eager attention paid to the offices of the Church. The blessed Saviour, who hath "the key of David, who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth," will pity us in our feebleness and imperfection.

3. But the description of the Church of Philadelphia is yet more exactly applicable to *the case of the different larger branches of Christ's Holy Catholic Church* when they have been weak and unstable, and yet have held fast Christ's word and not denied his name.

The general struggle of the primitive Christian Churches, during the persecutions of the first three centuries, is well known. The little strength of many of them, during some periods of the Arian and Pelagian

heresies, when Athanasius and Augustine stood almost solitary, like bulwarks in the Christian camp, is again known to all. The small spiritual power and grace, also, of various devout Christian flocks during the increasing corruptions in doctrine, worship, and morals of the dark ages, is a fact now generally acknowledged. And at the commencement of the blessed Reformation of religion in Europe, in the sixteenth century, how feeble was the state of the different Protestant bodies. And yet these several Churches, and bodies of Christians during all these struggles, "kept Christ's word and did not deny his name," whatever errors and superstitions for a time mingled with their faith.

And during the period that the Western Apostacy was thus establishing itself, and the usurpations of the Church and court of Rome were binding the traditions and errors of men upon the neck of Christendom, there still remained Churches who were never subject to that dominant and corrupt Body at all. In the valleys of Piedmont and amongst the rocks of Haute Dauphiné, branches of the primitive Churches survived the general wreck of truth and grace, and never sunk into the Roman Catholic apostacy.

The Christians of St. Thomas, also, on the coast of Malabar, founded possibly by that apostle, and in all probability not of later date than the second or third century, have lately become well known to us by the visits which Dr. C. Buchanan first, and then the learned and pious Bishop Middleton made to them. I consider it a singular happiness to myself that I have been able to follow in the steps of the first Bishop of this See, and to have visited them on my voyage to

**Bombay last winter. Whatever feebleness there may be, as there is, in these Churches—whatever errors in doctrine, or matters tending to superstition in worship, still they retain the essentials of Christ's word, and have never denied his name, like the Church of Rome, by fundamental corruptions of the faith and holiness of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>**

**I may be permitted, perhaps, to add that our own Anglican Protestant Church in India has, in many respects, but little strength. She is not yet co-extensive with our scattered Christian population. Our principal stations only are supplied with chaplains, whilst most of the Christians in our numerous smaller ones are as sheep without a shepherd. Surrounded with an immense Heathen and Mohammedan population, and the supply of ministers being thus insufficient, and most of us being sadly shut out from intercourse with each other, we have hard work to keep Christ's holy and blessed word. The current also of public opinion has tended to weaken the little strength we have. First, for half a century or more the excessive dread of awakening the prejudices of our native subjects paralysed our exertions for upholding the honour of Christ. And since these have been proved to be groundless, general declarations against all Churches, all Bishops, all establishments, all ancient institutions, have been reproduced from home for the last three**

<sup>1</sup> The substance of this discourse was delivered in the Syrian Church of Cotyam, on Sunday, November 22d, 1835, in the presence of the Metran, of about forty of his Clergy, and more than a thousand of the laity; the Rev. Benjamin Bailey, of the Church Missionary Society, being interpreter.



says, "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation, that keepeth the truth, may enter in;" and again, "Thy gates shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles."

When our Lord, therefore, says to the Church of Philadelphia, "Behold I have set before thee an open door," it imports that means of grace and truth and honour would be multiplied, that obstacles would be removed, that labourers would be raised up and sent into the vineyard, that hearts would be opened to welcome Christ's word and avow his name, that unity and peace would prevail amongst them under their Angel, or presiding minister, that the gospel would be propagated, that those who were "liars and of the synagogue of Satan" should come and "worship at their feet," as it were, and acknowledge that Christ had loved them; and that under mighty trials, and in "the hour of temptation which was coming on all the world," Christ would keep them from being borne away, and denying his name.

Thus also in every age Christ *opens the door to his faithful, though feeble servants individually*. If they keep the word of his patience, he will keep them also in the hour of temptation, and set before them, according to their measure, an open door of comfort, holiness, and success.

He will send them ministers to feed them with knowledge and understanding, or remove them to stations where ministers reside, he will enable them to establish benevolent and religious institutions, he will prosper schools, he will raise them up friends and

helpers from the most unexpected quarters, he will take away the greater difficulties and hindrances to their usefulness and growth in grace, he will visit them with his reviving spirit. Instead of being shut up, they shall see before them an open door.

It is a good rule for private Christians in a country like India, where we have but "little strength," to be very diligent in improving the individual, and apparently inconsiderable occasions which arise. Wait not for what you think a wide portal, but enter by the open, though narrow door which is set before you. Teach a few children, distribute a few Bibles, Prayer Books, and religious Books; aid your pious minister in his good designs; send up money to our larger Religious Societies; economise, that you may have means for liberality. Above all, set a conspicuous example, pray without ceasing, honour the public worship of God, keep holy the Sabbath. Thus the door may gradually open wider. Never despond. Christ has "the key of David;" events in Providence, and supplies of grace are at his supreme disposal.

And thus *with Christian Churches, the times of weakness and persecution will pass away to them*, as they did to the primitive Churches, and to those in the Arian and Pelagian times of heresy, and at the period of the Reformation.

The three remarkable ancient Churches, to which I have referred, have had "an open door" of late set before them by visits made by ministers and members of our own Church and others, by subscriptions collected in their favour, by works published to make known their sufferings, by schools established, by

means furnished for educating their Clergy, by the translation of the Scriptures into their vernacular languages, and by planting missionaries in their borders.

The Syrian Churches have more especially been succoured since the visit of the eminent Prelate and Presbyter of our Church to which I have referred; and five English clergymen of the Church Missionary Society have been, for nearly twenty years, labouring to open wide the door of grace and truth before them.

So also has a great and effectual door been opened during the last half century, to our Anglican Church generally, by the growing power and extending dominions of our country. And we trust that her feeble strength in India will, ere long, be fortified, and that Christ will say to her here, as he long has at home, "Behold I set before thee an open door."

<sup>1</sup> When delivered at Delhi, the following passage was inserted,—“And here I should be wanting to the first duties of my station, as well as to the calls of gratitude, if I did not publicly acknowledge the debt our Church owes to the munificence of the individual who has erected this fine Church, beyond all question the most splendid in India.”

“The military renown of so generous a benefactor only renders this monument of his piety the more conspicuous in the eyes of surrounding Heathens and Mohammedans. We know it was recorded of a Centurion of old, ‘He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue.’ To have been the first, therefore, to erect a Protestant Church in India, at his own charge, and in the imperial city of Delhi, is not less a proof, I think, of this brave officer’s love to the country of his birth.

“Nor is it an inconsiderable circumstance that the beauty of the sacred edifice will allow of an advantageous comparison with

3. For Christ will *allow no difficulties or obstacles to frustrate his designs of mercy*; “Behold, I set before thee an open door, AND NO MAN SHALL SHUT IT.” This language implies that many will desire to shut it—that many will make attempts to shut it—that many will seem likely to succeed, and perhaps actually succeed for a time, in shutting it; but that no man, no

the monuments of architectural magnificence, for which this city is distinguished. This is not an inconsiderable or obscure or inconvenient edifice, but an ornamental, and yet chaste, Ecclesiastical Building, to lift aloft the standard of the Cross of Christ amidst surrounding Mosques and Pagodas.

“I would guard in what I say from any approach to excessive commendation—that would neither become this occasion nor the sacred office I fill—but I cannot avoid adding, that the circumstance that this noble-minded soldier should have, on first entering Delhi in triumph in early youth, and beholding its gorgeous Palaces and Mosques, formed the resolve to build, if it ever should be in his power, a Church to the name of Christ ---that more than twenty years after that period he should on his first finding himself in a situation to do so, have instantly acted upon his vow—that the loss and disturbance of a large portion of his property by the failure of the great houses of Agency in Calcutta in the midst of his undertaking, and when its execution was likely to cost him five times the amount he had originally supposed, should not have deterred him from completing his purpose—and that he should have lived to be present now, after a lapse of thirty-three years, at the Consecration of his own Church, bearing his own name,—all this adds a singular interest to the present solemnity.

“I can judge somewhat better of the aid this act of piety renders to the cause of Christ in India, from knowing in how many Stations there are no Churches; and how much the inappropriate, I had almost said disgraceful, substitutes, which we are compelled to have recourse to, impedes the public worship of Christ and dishonours our religion in the eyes of the natives. Indeed, you have

power in heaven or earth, shall ultimately close that door which he that has "the key of David" is pleased to open. It is thus the apostle Paul says, "A great door and effectual is opened; and there are many adversaries."

And in the whole history of our Lord and of his apostles, the rage of Jewish and Heathen opponents stimulated by Satan, the great spiritual adversary, is yourselves felt no little inconvenience from this source. The united subscriptions therefore, of Christian communities, collected with the greatest exertions, have been called forth to build the smallest and most unpretending Churches, where the Government have not thought it proper to undertake the necessary works.

"But here what with the utmost difficulty the entire society of Benares, Allahabad, Mussoorie, Simlah, Loodianah, and other stations have effected, the single bounty of an individual has surpassed.

"It is not a little remarkable also that in this same province the munificence of the late Begum Sumroo had just placed at my disposal a lac of rupees for the education of a Native Ministry, besides half a lac for the poor at Calcutta, and another half lac transmitted through the present Honorable Lieutenant-Governor of the Western Provinces to myself, to be placed at the disposal of the Archbishop of Canterbury for charitable purposes. And when I remind you, in addition to all this, of the munificence of the great religious Missionary Institution in England, the 'Incorporated Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts,' and the erection, about twenty years since, of Bishop's College in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, I think we must acknowledge with thankfulness that Christ is, indeed, saying to us, 'Behold, I set before you an open door.'

"And if this blessed Saviour is pleased to multiply similar, or somewhat similar instances of piety, and to pour out his Holy Spirit, so as to open the wills of men to inquire after the Gospel, which is thus conspicuously exhibited before them, there is nothing which we may not expect."

ever found to be in proportion to the progress of truth and grace. When “the good seed is sown in the field, the enemy straightway comes and sows tares amongst the wheat.” But let this be our encouragement, to “keep Christ’s word and not deny his name,” that when he shall say, “Behold, I have set before thee an open door”—he will not fail to add, as in the text, “and no man shall shut it.”

For Christ is, as we have already observed, *supreme in the orders of his Providence*. The holy One and the true, he that hath “the key of David,” will take care that, as when he shutteth, none shall open, so that when he sets before us an open door, no man shall shut it.

Christ also has *all hearts in his hands*. He turned away from his Church the persecution of the furious bigot Saul, by that grace which made him “a preacher of the faith which once he destroyed.” He “opened the heart of Lydia.” His “hand was with the apostle at Antioch, and “many believed and turned unto the Lord.”

Christ can, moreover, *overrule all apparently adverse events to the ultimate good of his Church*. “My thoughts are not as your thoughts, saith the Lord; neither are your ways, my ways; for as the heaven is high above the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” “The wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he shall restrain.”

Christ also, *after humbling and chastising his Church, is generally pleased to exalt it*. A season of peculiar difficulty, of little strength, of extraordi-

nary depression, trial and sorrow, is often the prelude to great spiritual success. When the door seems close shut, and no one to go in or go out; then unexpectedly the portals open, and grace is vouchsafed from on high. It is in this way that man is humbled, and instruments seen to be ineffectual of themselves, and Christ alone magnified and extolled in the operations of his grace.

Never perhaps was such a door opened as to external things, for usefulness to a Church and nation, since the ascension of our Lord, as is now opened to us in British India. The universal peace for twenty years past resembles, in some degree, that which preceded the first propagation of the Gospel. If, then, we "keep Christ's word and deny not his name" during our weakness as to the details of Christian worship, doctrine, and the extension and success of missions, we may humbly hope that Christ will approve our incipient attempts, and will set before us, both in temporal and spiritual respects, "an open door which no man shall be able to shut."

Let each one, then, first *apply the general subject we have been discussing, to himself and his own salvation*. Let each one enter by the opened door of faith and grace in Christ Jesus. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." The door of utterance and usefulness as to the Church, is the door of salvation as to you. Whatever be your larger or smaller opportunities outwardly, there stands open spiritually, the door of grace in the gospel, by which you are invited to enter. Yield then to Christ's invitation. Knock as

a suppliant at the gate of mercy. Repent and turn to God. Enter in before the Bridegroom cometh, and they that are ready having gone in with him to the marriage, the door be shut. "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." The Bible is open before you. Salvation is open before you. He that hath "the key of David" presents himself to you in his gospel. And he will open to you and admit you amongst his invited guests, and give you pardon and acceptance and every blessing, if you apply to him aright.

But, remember, he is "the holy One and the true." And that nothing but heartfelt personal repentance and faith, evidenced by "works meet for repentance," can ever stand in his sight.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At Delhi the following passage was inserted,—*"Let us all, in the next place, enter the opened door for the worship and honour of Almighty God, which is here so remarkably set before us. If you have 'kept Christ's word and not denied his name,' when you had no Church, and but 'little strength,' how much more should you do it, now that he has vouchsafed you this fine building for the celebration of the Sabbath and for the solemn performances of prayer and praise. We are responsible to Almighty God for every blessing he bestows. Let not then slight excuses prevail to detain you from the Courts of the Lord."*

"Almost all other religionists in India put to shame the languor and indifference of nominally Protestant Christians. How punctual are the Mohammedans in attendance on their religious offices, how devout in appearance is their conduct, how solemnly silent before the ministers of their worship, how profound their prostrations. Whereas we come to church, or abstain, at our pleasure. We arrive late or not, as it may happen. We sit unconcerned, perhaps, during the most solemn acts of prayer and praise. We listlessly wait for the gratification of curiosity



Let us, then, remember what "little strength" we have, and how constantly we need all public and private means of grace, in order that it may be increased, and that we may "keep Christ's word" with more fidelity, and that he may open before us a wider door of grace and consolation, of peace and truth, of stability and honour in the gospel.

Outward helps of themselves will never save our souls ; sacred edifices will never save our souls ; ministers, Sabbaths, Bibles will never save our souls ; the opened doors of mercy will never save our souls, if we rely presumptuously on these external aids, and do not use them devoutly and spiritually for the ends for which they are designed.

Lastly, let each one enter in at the door of *activity and usefulness, as respects the instruction of Heathens and Mohammedans, as Christ may be pleased to set it open before us*. He that enters the door of grace as to his own salvation, will not stand without, when opportunities are presented for diffusing the knowledge of Christ over India. And these opportunities are never altogether wanting. The position of our country in India is most favourable for every prudent effort to

in the sermon to be delivered. Every thing seems to occur to our minds except the solemn thoughts which ought to swallow up all others—the honour of the great God and Saviour in whose presence we appear, and the obligations we are under to worship him, 'in spirit and in truth,' in proportion to our clearer light and more abundant advantages. The beautiful Church of Delhi will condemn, instead of blessing, those who neglect the public worship of Almighty God which it has been so piously and munificently reared to celebrate."

make known the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. Circulate, then, suitable books, establish schools. Aid and support pious and discreet Missionaries. Pray to Him that hath "the key of David, who openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth," to set before our Church an open door. Fear not the temporary opposition or lukewarmness of a few. No man can shut, when Christ openeth. The safety of our country is bound up with the discharge of our duties as a Christian nation. The events of Providence are at the disposal of Christ. He is "the holy One and the true." The sovereignty of India is given us, not for temporal ends only, but that we may hold forth "Christ's word," and not "deny his name." If we honour Christ, he will honour us. If we keep his word," he will set before us here, in a more exalted sense than he has yet done, an "open door." Nothing can be more honorable, more dignified—if I may be forgiven for saying so—or acting with higher intentions than the Civil and Military Services in India. Let only the piety and love to Christ, which is now, I trust, diffusing itself more and more throughout those Services, go on increasing, and the blessing of the great Arbiter will rest still upon British India.

If, however, we fail to enter in at the door which he is opening to us, we must not wonder that the fearful judgments which have fallen on the Asiatic Churches should ultimately overtake us. Where are now these ancient cities? Ephesus is lost; Sardis reduced to a

<sup>1</sup> At Delhi I added here,—“The erection of this church will be the talk of the neighbouring provinces. The native inhabitants around will see that we have a religion.”

miserable village; Pergamos and Thyatira covered with Mohammedan darkness; Laodicea is a complete desolation. Smyrna and Philadelphia alone have been saved. "Amongst the Greek colonies and Churches of Asia, Philadelphia," observes Gibbon, "is still erect, a column in a scene of ruins." And, may we not in like manner say, where are the European nations, who preceded us in the career of Indian power? Where the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French? Would we therefore, contribute in the highest sense, to the safety of our country—would we strengthen the foundations of her dominion—would we raise her name amongst the Christian powers who have ruled in Asia—would we diffuse a community of feeling between our native subjects and ourselves—would we aid in making known the greatest benefit which our God and Saviour has ever bestowed upon man, we must "keep Christ's word in the presence of the people around us—we must enter in at the "opened door" of his providence and grace—we must inscribe on the temple of Britain's glory, the name of our God.

## SERMON XXV.

EPHESIANS iii. 14—21.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask and think, according to the power that worketh in us: to him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, word without end. Amen.

CHRISTIANITY is the religion of devotion. Prayer is her appropriate work. Every division of our preceding discourses, therefore, calls on us, now that we are bringing them to a conclusion, to a solemn act of supplication and praise to Almighty God.

A sense of the magnitude of the blessings we hope for in the universal conversion of the world, together with a view of our own sinfulness and feebleness, and of the small comparative progress already made,

may dictate petition. A sense of the Divine character, and promises engaged for the completion of the scheme of redemption, may dictate praise. Nor can we find a more comprehensive and sublime example of devotion, than in the words which I have read.

The apostle is animating and consoling his Ephesian converts by the consideration that they were now fellow citizens of the saints and of the household of God, and formed a part of that one universal spiritual Temple and Church which was being "built on the foundation of apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;" and which was rising up and increasing continually by the accession of new converts, to be ultimately, in the most extensive sense of the term, "the habitation of God through the Spirit."

To aid in advancing this great result, he prepares for pouring out the most fervent supplications on their behalf; "For this cause," thus he begins in the first verse of this chapter, "I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles"—for though he could not, as formerly, go from place to place, to establish the Churches, he could yet pray for them, prisoner as he was at Rome. He then pauses after these introductory words, to interpose some remarks, in his usual exuberant manner, on that spiritual temple of which he had been speaking, and for which his prayers were to be poured out—the "mystery hidden from ages and generations," he tells them, was now developed. "The Gentiles were fellow heirs." "The unsearchable riches of Christ were preached" among them. "The manifold wisdom of God" was thereby displayed to

the heavenly world.<sup>1</sup> They were “not to faint,” therefore on account of his imprisonment and other “tribulations” for them, which, in such a cause, was rather a topic for their joy and glory” before God.<sup>2</sup> He then resumes in our text the words which he had interrupted, in the first verse, “for this cause;”<sup>3</sup> and proceeds to an act itself of fervent prayer and adoration, in which he implores for them all the blessings they needed, in order to a full participation of the privileges, of the Spiritual Church, of which they were now members—the power of the Holy Ghost; the abode of Christ in their hearts; well-grounded love; and an apprehension of the prodigious extent of the love of Christ—and this union with “all saints” of “whatever nation, kindred, or tongue.”

He thus ascends to the main object of his supplication, that they and the rest of the universal Church might be filled, in a higher sense than the of Holy Holies in the Temple of Solomon ever was, with all the fulness of the Divine and beatific inhabitation.

This brings him to the thanksgiving, with which he concludes his act of devotion, and in which he adores Almighty God as able far to surpass all his and their petitions on this subject, and even the thoughts of those who framed them; and to whom glory throughout all ages was to be offered by Christ Jesus in this one spiritual Church, for all the riches of mercy and love by which it was founded and completed.

<sup>1</sup> See Sermon II.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 1—13.

<sup>3</sup> The whole prayer is connected by these resumed words with Chap. ii. ver. 19---22; and Chap. iii. ver. 1.

The apostle's act of devotion, then, divides itself, as all his solemn prayers do, into two parts—supplication, and praise; and one arising from the other. The first will lead us to implore all, and more than all the blessings we have been adverting to in our preceding discourses; whilst the second will teach us where to look for the fulfilment of our remaining most fervent desires, and to whom to present our offerings of praise.

May God—the God of salvation, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, vouchsafe to assist us in this devotional close of our series of discourses.

I. In considering *the supplications* of the text, we must first notice the *final object of the apostle*, “That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God;” or, as he expresses in an earlier verse, “In whom ye also are build-ed together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

There is, indeed, in the ever-blessed God a fulness of incommunicable perfections, of natural attributes, and unapproachable divinity, which no one without the most daring presumption can ever aspire after. Infinite power, infinite knowledge, infinite wisdom, infinite sovereignty—the omniscience, the omnipresence, the self-existence, the eternity of God, it would be a sin even to aim at partaking of. This was the essence of the first transgressions; angels fell by pride, man fell by pride. It is the essence of all sin now. Man presumes to be like God. He rises up against God, he will not submit to him, nor obey his will. He is a self-sufficient, perverse, rebellious creature.

But there is in God, also, a fulness of moral perfections and felicity, which he deigns to communicate in

some faint measure, to his creatures. There is such a thing as our becoming in this sense, as St. Peter speaks, "partakers of the divine nature;" of our being "born of God," and "born from above," as our Saviour teaches us; or being "sons of God," as St. John, by receiving some rays of the moral glories, perfections, and favour of the Almighty.

The fulness of God in this view—as to his benevolence, his mercy, his compassion, his truth, his purity, his justice, his wisdom, his holiness, his happiness, may be, in some inconsiderable degree, derived to us. Some drops may overflow upon us, as it were, from the inexhaustible fountain of the divine holiness and joy, which, small as they are compared with the ever-blessed One from whom they proceed, may constitute a fulness and plenitude as respects our narrow capacities of reception. This is the end of man, his ultimate rest, his felicity, the source of repose, the full blessedness of which his natural and moral powers are capable.

There is, indeed, nothing which man now feels more perpetually and painfully than the insufficiency of the creature to render him happy. Nothing now fills his heart. The world, sin, pleasure, knowledge, science, success in his pursuits, all leave a void. And even the faithful servant of Christ individually is ever sensible in himself of imperfection, of distance from God the source of felicity, of feeble faith, love, hope, peace, joy; whilst he sees in the Church, also, faintness of affection, contentions, separations, prejudices, imperfect knowledge, schisms, heresies, apostacies, and the narrow limits of Christianity itself. "Even we,"



saith the apostle, "which have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves," (as well as "the creation" which is groaning and travailing in pain together) waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."

But when the universal Church, and each individual Christian shall be "filled with all the fulness of God," the insufficiency and vanity of the creature will be felt no more, the imperfections of our present attainments will be supplied, the tide of holiness and peace will flow through every soul; and some faint irradiations of the Divine perfections and happiness will be reflected on us.

For this every believer and each branch of Christ's universal Church is to pray continually. Nothing short of this will adequately meet and satisfy their large desires. And, as the Holy of Holies of old was filled with the visible Divine glory which penetrated and pervaded every part, so are we to pray that the spiritual Temple of the New Testament, consisting of Jew and Gentile, may be filled with all the spiritual fulness of the communicable holiness and happiness of God inhabiting it, and manifesting himself in it.

This, then, is the sublime object of the entire prayer—the inhabitation of God; if any one attains this, the dissatisfaction of his sinful state terminates, and all felicity pours in; if the Church, all the ends of redemption are accomplished, the mediatorial kingdom is closed, and God is from henceforth all in all.

But how can man, a sinner, come up to this fountain of purity and joy; what is to bring down the incom-

prehensible God to his apprehension; what to remove the mighty mountain of his sins which obstructs his approach to God?

2. *The intermediate topics of our apostle's petitions* will reply to these questions—"that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith: that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge"—Christ abiding in the heart, and a view of his love in its vast dimensions, arising from deeply rooted affection to him, are then, the mighty means of a sinner's coming up to the spring-head of happiness and holiness in God himself. "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Christ must be received into our hearts by faith, that he may inhabit and dwell there, not in a visible temple, as of old, nor on a typical propitiatory and mercy seat, but by invisible grace in the affections of the true penitent. He must be enthroned there as the Lord of salvation, of life, of pardon, of peace, of joy. Sin and Satan who have usurped the heart, must be driven from their seat, and Christ be welcomed as a conqueror, and must make there, not a transient resting-place only, but his permanent residence and abode. For, "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build unto me, and where is the place of my rest? For all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." To which

passage our Lord probably alluding, expounds and applies the sentiment to himself, "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode in him."

This is, then, the first step towards a return to God as the fulness of joy, faith receiving Christ into the heart, as a Saviour from guilt, sin, and death. Till this is done nothing is done, and all speculations concerning the plenitude of God are vain. And therefore the apostle, instead of saying that Christ dwells in the universal Church as his temple, as perhaps we might have expected, speaks of his residing in the heart of the believer; because it is only by the multiplication of such individual inhabitations, that the whole body of the Church is "filled with the fulness of God."

But, in the next place, some holy and affecting views of the dimensions, so to speak, of the love of Christ in redemption, are necessary to this end. "That ye may be able to comprehend"—reach after, take a view of, embrace, lay hold of (for such is the force of the term rendered "comprehend," in opposition to that minute and adequate knowledge, which is afterwards stated to be unattainable) "the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ." His language is here most sublime; he labours to convey his meaning. He speaks as we should in describing infinite space, the boundaries of which we cannot perceive, and the extent of which we cannot define; he attempts to measure what is immeasurable; he endeavours to trace out what is unsearchable.

The allusion probably still is to the temple of Solomon, the particular dimensions of which were so

expressly and minutely laid down in the Old Testament, and whose magnificent proportions threw into insignificance the second temple. He accordingly transfers the fourfold idea of dimension to that spiritual temple, in which Jews and Gentiles are now buildèd together in the New Testament Church.

We are not to attempt, therefore, a particular explication of each term in this admeasurement, and consider separately the breadth first, and then the length, and next the depth, and lastly the height of the love of Christ, which would be frittering away the force and beauty of the image; but we are to view it as expressing generally the vast extent of this wonderful redemption, and of the love from which it springs.

For redemption is inconceivable; “it passeth knowledge” (though it may be comprehended in its general proportions and magnitude) as to the person and original deity of the Son of God; as to his infinite condescension in taking upon him our nature; as to the mysteries of his incarnation, suffering, agony, death; as to his glorious resurrection, his session at the right hand of the Father, his mediatorial kingdom, the mission of his Spirit, the promulgation and success of his gospel—all these topics have a “breadth and length and depth and height” which surpass the stretch of our keenest view.

Nor doth the admission of “all saints,” of Gentiles as well as Jews, and the ultimate conversion of mankind, less deserve our admiration; for this is “the mystery which from the beginning of the world was hidden in God, who created all things,” both in the natural and spiritual world, “by Jesus Christ.”

But especially the love of Christ, from which all this flows, has a boundless and inconceivable extent. Christ loved us and gave himself for us. His birth was love, his death was love, his Spirit is love, his kingdom of Jew and Gentile is love. The New Testament temple, like the banner of the spouse in the Canticles, is love—love incomprehensible, love undeserved, love which could brave and endure all the humiliations and agonies which were necessary to secure its ends.

Well may the apostle, in the fervent language of the text, pray that the Ephesians might be able to trace out and comprehend with all saints, “the breadth and length and depth and height”—not of the new and comprehensive spiritual Temple, as would have been natural for him perhaps to have said, after using these terms of admeasurement, but of THE LOVE OF CHRIST, which extended wide as the race of fallen men, which stretched itself through the earth, which embraced in its vast circuit believers of every country and tribe, and which sunk for ever all the distinctions which divided nation from nation and man from man.

But on such a subject it is by affection rather than by knowledge that we proceed aright. In all matters of sublime devotion the understanding is comparatively little employed. It is holy love, contemplation, gratitude which are the best aids of our progress. It is not by knowledge, properly so called, that we comprehend the love of Christ, but by love.

And therefore St. Paul introduces this branch of his petitions by the expression, “That ye being rooted and grounded in love.” For, after we have first re-

ceived the blessed Saviour into our hearts, and he has taken up his mansion there, love begins to kindle a delight in contemplating and holding communion with him as the Lord of our affections, in an adherence to him with the warmest emotions of our renewed nature, a study to please him in all things, a diligence to shun what he prohibits and disapproves, a joy in being conformed to his blessed image and bearing his cross. It is only by degrees, however, that the penitent becomes "rooted and grounded," well fixed and settled, in this love; and can comprehend a little of that love of Christ which embraces in one body the whole assemblage of the faithful, and travel over the heights and mountains of his immeasurable grace. He once indeed could see no beauty in the scheme of redemption, nor in the fulness of God to which it re-conducts man. At an earlier stage of his Christian course also he still understood but little. But now having become more "rooted and grounded in love," and having overcome the contrary passions, he can follow out better the prodigious design, he can discern somewhat more of the love of Christ, he can conceive some clearer idea, however inadequate still, of the "length and breadth and depth and height," of the invisible and universal spiritual temple; and thus he begins himself to be filled with plenitude of blessings which indwelling Deity confers.

3. *But one further branch of the apostle's petitions remains to be noticed.* For how is this faith to be engendered, these holy affections to be enkindled, this comprehension of the inconceivable love of Christ to be attained.

Something is previously required,—the grace of the Holy Spirit. This, then, the apostle is careful to implore at the very outset of his prayer, “That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”

The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life. He infuses life into the soul of fallen man. He quickens it from “the death of trespasses and sins.” He “grants repentance unto life.” This is his first gracious work. He next glorifies Christ as a Saviour to the view and feelings of the penitent, unites him to this Saviour by a living faith, and enables him to repose on his sacrifice for pardon and reconciliation with God. This is his second work. His third and subsequent operations are to infuse strength in all the course of the Christian life and conflict.

The Scripture frequently speaks of this might in the inner man. “In the day when I cried, Thou heardest me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.” “Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power.” “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

It is this vigour in the inner man, like what we term strength in the natural frame, which enables the faithful soul to overcome its spiritual adversaries, to renounce the world, to mortify its members, to live and walk by faith, to grow in grace, and prepare for duty and suffering.

Especially, when strong prejudices of education or habit are to be overcome, as in the case of the Ephesian converts; when new combinations of religious

feeling are to be formed, and a stretch and expansion of faith and love to be exercised above our previous conceptions of things, and contrary to them; and, above all, when our contracted minds are to labour to “comprehend with all saints the breadth and length and depth and height, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge,” nothing but the power of the Holy Ghost can invigorate us to the task.

And that in no slight or ordinary measure. We required “to be strengthened with all might, according to the riches of his glory in the inner man.” We need large accessions of light, humility, vigour, spiritual principle and habits, self-knowledge, faith, charity. Thus only can we be gradually fortified, not only to receive Christ in all his offices as the Lord of our affections, but also, to be so rooted and grounded in his love, as to be able to climb with all saints, the height of his love in Redemption; to survey and comprehend the vast proportions, and to understand the mystery of the one spiritual temple reared for the one universal body of the faithful.

Such is the order and extent of the first part of the apostle’s prayer. It proceeds, as we see, from petition to petition, till it reaches all the fulness of God. The Holy Spirit first “strengthens with all might the inner man;” “Christ then dwells,” and inhabits “the heart by faith;” the soul is next “rooted and grounded in love;” and lastly, gradually comprehends “with all saints” the vast dimensions of the immeasurable love of Christ. The character, extent, and peculiar blessings of the New Testament Church are in this manner seen, acknowledged, received and



gloried in. The native converts, like the Ephesians, thus understand that they are “no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints and of the household of God;” that they “are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom they also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

Well then may the apostle break forth into what constitutes the second division of this great act of devotion,

II. *Praise*; “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

In this second part of his sublime prayer the apostle most effectually animates us, first to expect all the blessings he had been imploring; and then to ascribe them, when received, to him alone, whose glory they were designed to illustrate.

1. He animates us to the first *by the particular view in which he contemplates the ever blessed God*, His power and all-sufficiency. For after the gift of his only-begotten Son, the death of Christ upon the cross, his resurrection, the mission of his Spirit, the foundations of an universal spiritual Church, and the immeasurable breadths and lengths and depths and heights of his love therein, nothing remains but the

gracious exertion of the almighty power of God to accomplish all the purposes of such a redemption. The sacred writers therefore frequently repose in the Divine power in this view, as that which most directly tends to sustain our faith under present appearances and discomfitures. So in the close of the epistle to the Romans, "Now unto him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel;" and in that of St. Jude, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

2. *What the Divine all-sufficiency is about to effect*, we next learn. It is not left in general. God can "do exceeding abundantly above all we ask and think," especially with reference to the completion of the one universal Church.

Consider here the extent to which even the first step of this climax goes. For how much have the saints of God actually asked. What an extent of verbal and written petitions is exhibited in Scripture. Take the prayers which are recorded in the several sacred books, from those of Abraham, or Jacob, or Moses, or David, to that which we have been considering in the text, and tell me what must be contained in the assurance that God is "able to do all that we ask."

But the imaginations and thoughts of men, which is the second step in the climax, open new fields of wonder in the contemplation of the Divine all-sufficiency. Words are after all limited. They serve only to arouse our minds to certain topics described. They stretch our thoughts, kindle our desires, and furnish matter for repeated musings and meditations. The

words of such a passage as that of the apostle, set all our powers at work ; we weigh what is to be understood by the might of the Spirit, the inhabitation of Christ in the heart, the being “rooted and grounded in love,” the vast admeasurements of the grace of Christ in redemption, the temple of the one universal Church of all saints, Jews and Gentiles, and the fulness of God pervading the whole abode. But the apostle here teaches us that when we have fixed our meditations on every part, and enlarged and multiplied our thoughts to the utmost, when faith has taken its loftiest flight, and hope mounted on her boldest wing, God is able to do more than we think, or can think, or than ever “entered the heart of man to conceive.” “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord ; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

But this is not all. There is one more step in the climax. God is able to do “exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.”—He cannot only fulfil the petitions recorded in words, or expressed in “those groanings which cannot be uttered,” of which the apostle speaks in another place ; but He can abundantly, far more abundantly, accomplish his promises of love. The floods of grace not only rise above the level of our words and desires, but exceed superabundantly that standard ; overtop it, and leave it buried in the depths below. God gives like himself. His power and love stop not where our imaginations and thoughts terminate. There is an exuberance, an all-sufficiency in Him, which none of our petty aspira-

tions can reach. He overpasses, both in the matter and manner and time of his gifts, all our preconceived notions of munificence and power.

3. But we must proceed to notice *the pledge and anticipation given us of these blessings* in the actual power of grace now exerted in the Church; which the apostle refers to when he further says, "according to the power that worketh in us." The work which God has already wrought, and is daily working in his Church, is the assurance to us that he will accomplish the whole purposes of his grace; he is not only able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think; but he is now doing it: the power now working in the conversion of sinners, in the reception they give to Christ into their hearts, in their holy love, and in their apprehension of the heights and depths of the love of Christ, is itself a specimen of what he will ultimately effect. The power which will be exerted in the gradual completion of the spiritual Church, and the gathering into it all nations and tribes and people and tongues, and the rendering it at last, and in the fullest sense, the habitation of God through the Spirit, is only "according to the power" which wrought in the Ephesian converts, and builded them on the foundation of apostles and prophets. It is only according to that power which is put forth in the awakening and new creating of each individual sinner. It is only according to that power which has been working in all parts of the Christian Church in all past ages, and has added converts upon converts to it from the heathen nations, and built them up as lively stones on the sure foundation. It is only ac-

ording to that power which is working in all our Churches and missions now, though in comparatively a small measure ; and which will, in the times known to the All-wise God, be exerted in a manner “ exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.”

The seed contains, in principle, the harvest ; ‘the bud, the full flower ; the acorn, the oak ; the foundation, the whole building.

The full designs of God in the universal temple and Church of the New Testament is only the development of the grace vouchsafed in the case of the conversion of a single soul.

This closes the first part of the act of adoration, in which the apostle animates us to expect all the blessings he had been praying for, especially with reference to the New Testament Church ; and thus prepares for the gratitude and joy which now bursts forth in the concluding part of it, “ To Him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

1. *For God is the fountain of all glory.* When he sheds some emanations of his excellencies upon the creatures, it is that his glory may be displayed. God’s glory is the end of all things. He made man for his glory. He sent his Son into the world for his glory. He saves us to “ the praise of the glory of his grace.” The saints ever offer, and with knowledge and design, glory to God. As he is pleased to bless, they render him glory. And in proportion as he “ does exceeding abundantly above all they ask or think, according to the power which worketh in them,” they

continually exclaim, “unto Him”—not unto ourselves; “unto Him”—and to no created beings, angels and men; “unto Him”—and not to means, ministers, second causes, instruments; “unto Him,” and to Him alone, be glory for the beginning and the carrying on of the mighty work of Redemption; for each individual penitent, in whose heart the Spirit infuses life and strength, and in whom Christ dwells; as well as for the innumerable company who are forming the universal spiritual temple which he is filling, and will at last perfectly fill, with the plenitude of his presence and grace.

2. Nor is *the place where this glory is to be offered undetermined*. It is “in the Church.” It is here that the glory of God is sounded forth, that the love of Christ is made known, that souls are born anew and nurtured, that solemn praise and thanksgiving are offered.

This is that spiritual, invisible body of the members and elect of Christ which comprehends Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free; all in whom Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and by whom his love, in all its vast dimensions, is being continually traced out, though never fully reached.

This Church is visible in her holy Sabbaths, her public worship of Almighty God, her lawfully appointed Ministry, her reading and preaching of God’s pure Word, her administration of Sacraments, her paternal and primitive order and discipline.

I need hardly pause to say, that no one of the various branches of Christ’s Holy Catholic Church is more Scriptural in her Articles of Faith, more devotional and sublime in her Liturgy, more apostolical in her

platform of Ecclesiastical Polity, and more mild and paternal in her spirit, than our own. Let only the prayer we have been considering be more and more imbibed by all her ministers in each age, and glory will be increasingly offered in her wide-spread congregations wherever she is planted, to the God and Father of all through Christ Jesus.

3. *Nor will these adorations cease.* "Throughout all ages, world without end," will the praises of our God arise from his redeemed Church in the name and through the intercession of its Saviour and Lord. Yes, this vast design will bring "glory to God in the highest" throughout all the rolling periods of time; and then onward still, amidst the countless successions of eternity.

Glory has already been brought to God in his Church in all preceding ages. In proportion as the vast spiritual temple has been reared or extended, in every period of time, the number of voices of men of all nations has been multiplied, which have ascribed glory to God in Christ Jesus.

The same is done now; wherever our Christian assemblies meet, they chaunt, "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ;" wherever our mission flocks are gathered, they sing praises to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And in all future time, glory shall be thus offered, throughout all ages, whilst the work is going on, whilst the temple is rising, whilst converts like the Ephesians are being built on the sure foundation. At length, when "the end shall come;" "when the whole earth shall be filled with his glory;" when the

top-stone of the spiritual edifice “shall be brought forth with rejoicing, crying, Grace, grace, unto it,” then shall the adorations of the universal Church, “filled with all the fulness of God,” and transplanted to the heavenly state, be “as the voice of many waters, and as a voice of a great thunder, and as the voice of harpers harping with their harps,” and saying, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

But I should be wanting in my duty, if I did not direct your attention, in drawing towards a conclusion, to *the solemn manner in which the apostle addresses himself* to the devotional acts of prayer and praise, of which we have thus most imperfectly delineated the particulars; “I bow my knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In our offerings of supplication and thanksgiving, whether in private or in the assembly of the faithful, let us ever bow our knees with contrition and awe of spirit, after the example of the apostle. Not with precipitation, not with self-confidence, not with familiarity, much less with indifference; but let the attitude and gesture of reverence ever accompany (except as circumstances of health forbid) the inward sentiment. Devout adoration, sense of infinite distance, conviction of unworthiness and necessity, deep emotions of gratitude, whilst filial fear and reverence, and the spirit of adoption and grace cry Abba, Father, should ever mark our approaches to God.



We are also carefully to remember, that it is as to the Father, "of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," that we are here encouraged to draw near. The first part of this character is the foundation of all acceptable prayer; the second is peculiarly appropriate to the acts of devotion we have been considering. We can never as sinners supplicate grace from Almighty God, except as we behold "his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." And when we pray, as in the text, for the growth of the Churches in faith and love, in peace and charity, and in comprehensive views of the New Testament economy; or when we are entering upon petitions for our native Churches and the universal diffusion of the gospel, or when we look around India and intercede for her desolate and banished Christian flocks, and the increase of labourers amongst them; or when we offer humble adorations to Him who is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"—on all these occasions we should especially regard and rely on that Saviour "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

All the saints who have departed in the faith of Jesus, with all those who are added to the Church from time to time on earth, together with the innumerable company of the angelic world, constitute but "one family in heaven and earth;" but one "general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven;" "all things, both things in heaven and things in earth" being gathered together, and reunited under one head, in Christ; in whom at length the bond which sin burst asunder will be

restored between our fallen world and the unfallen angels and archangels who kept their first estate, and abode in the love of God.

This is in entire harmony with the whole of the fervent devotion of the apostle in the text. Nor indeed is it a slight additional encouragement to our faith and hope. The Church forms one family, one household, one body of Christ; of which part are already in heaven, and the remainder struggling still on earth. The consummation will however soon unite them all in the one immense and glorious assembly and Church, which no man can number, above. The foundations of the vast building have been firmly laid; the superstructure has been long, and is still advancing; every soul that receives the might of the Spirit in the inner man, and welcomes Christ by faith, and is grounded in love, and comprehends something of the lengths and depths of the grace of redemption, is builded together as a part of the one spiritual fabric. He "who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think," has been in all past ages, and is now, working his mighty operations of grace in the progress of the spiritual edifice, and receiving offerings of glory and praise in his Church. Soon will "the whole family in heaven and earth" be collected; soon will "God accomplish the number of his elect, and hasten his kingdom;" soon will the universal spiritual temple be completed, and the whole company and every individual be filled, first on earth and then in heaven, "with all the fulness of God."

What, then, can be THE ONE COMMANDING, PRACTICAL CONCLUSION OF THIS WHOLE SERIES OF DISCOURSES, and

especially of our present subject? Is it not that each one of us should learn to address fervent devotions to Almighty God, similar to those of the blessed apostle in the text, *first for himself, and then for the universal Church?*

This is, then, our grand inference. Every individual must pray for himself, that he may have all these blessings, if he would attain salvation. Every one must himself bow the knee to "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" must supplicate to be inwardly strengthened by the Holy Spirit; must seek that "Christ may dwell in his heart by faith;" must implore personally to be "grounded in love." Every one must labour to measure for himself the dimensions of "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," and must desire after "the fulness" of the divine joy. Every one must render praises also, and glory for himself, to God for his all-sufficiency in surpassing all he asks or thinks; must implore of God to work in him according to his mighty power; and must in this manner pray to become a member for himself of the one whole "family in heaven and earth" gathered together in Christ; a stone in the one spiritual temple which stretches beyond all space, and which is now in part, and will at length completely, be replenished with all the fulness of God.

And he that thus supplicates and offers thanksgivings for himself, will *labour and pray also for the progress of the universal Church.*

What direction as to his petitions, or what motive for fervency in addressing them can he want, after the subject we have been considering? All we have noticed in the succession of sermons which we are now closing, is contained, and more than contained, in the

apostle's supplications; whilst the fulfilment of all our remaining hopes and desires is more than secured in the topics of the apostle's praise.

Of the BENEFICIAL TENDENCIES OF CHRISTIANITY after such a subject, why should I farther speak? They are all summed up and accumulated in it. What indeed is so beneficial, what so comprehensive, what so amazing, what so obviously adapted to the state and wants of man, what so essential to his present and future well-being, what so eminently calculated to promote the glory of God, as this scheme of immeasurable love in Christ Jesus? We have been adverting to these tendencies of Christianity as we have gone on. We have traced them in the mysteries of redemption;<sup>1</sup> in the application of those mysteries to the human heart;<sup>2</sup> in their effects on the Christian life and conduct;<sup>3</sup> in the consummation towards which every thing is advancing—the conversion of the world.<sup>4</sup>

But why should I remind you of these details? All is comprehended in the subject before us. What can so sublimely promote the highest good of man, as a religion which conveys to us this truth, God is LOVE—which is founded on the greatest act of love ever exhibited on earth; which breathes love in every part; which consists of a glorious edifice whose “depths and lengths and breadths and height” are love—and which will terminate in reuniting all those bonds which were dissolved by man's transgressions, and rendering

<sup>1</sup> Sermon I—VI.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon VII—XII.

<sup>3</sup> Sermon XIII—XVIII.

<sup>4</sup> Sermon XIX—XXIV.

“the whole family” of redeemed and pure intelligencies in heaven and earth, the never-ceasing habitation of the God of Love throughout eternity.

Labour, then, and pray for the increase and prosperity of the universal Church. Next to your own salvation, let this be nearest to your heart. Honour your religion wherever you go. Cultivate the spirit of humility and devotion to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. AID IN EVERY LAUDABLE DESIGN, UNDER WHATEVER DISCOURAGEMENTS, FOR BUILDING UP THE UNIVERSAL SPIRITUAL TEMPLE. Let each do a little. When God is working, the least attempts may issue into the most unexpected results. It is not you, but God, who has laid the foundations, and is rearing the vast superstructure. Despair not. If the spirit of controversy and worldliness were but once to cease amongst us, and the spirit of supplication and grace, after the manner of our text, to succeed, the face of things might soon be altered. Soon might instruments be raised up. Soon might the spiritual Temple rise in its goodly proportion. Soon might “the glory of God be revealed, and all flesh see it together.” Soon might the family on earth be enlarged, till, comprehending Jew and Gentile throughout the whole world, it was united to that in heaven, and the entire spiritual Edifice expanded into the glorious City of God above, where “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will be the Temple of it; and there will be no need of the light of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God will lighten it, and THE LAMB WILL BE THE LIGHT THEREOF.”

# APPENDIX.

## SERMON XXVI.<sup>1</sup>

### HEBREWS XIII. 7—9.

Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus<sup>2</sup> Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.

ALL India mourns. We have lost one of the gentlest, meekest, most exalted Christians that our Church has ever known. We have lost for the fifth time a chief pastor of our flocks, after a brief though most honorable and useful episcopate. We have lost him at the very instant when his presence was required for the solemn office of consecrating a brother Bishop, and thus settling for the first time our Anglican apostolical Church in India with her appointed pastors.

<sup>1</sup> Delivered at the Cathedral, Calcutta, March 17th, 1837, on occasion of the death of the Right Reverend Daniel Corrie, D. D., Lord Bishop of Madras, which took place on the 5th of February preceding, in the 60th year of his age, after a residence in India, as Chaplain and Archdeacon, of about thirty years, but an episcopacy of only fifteen months.

No passage appeared to me therefore more calculated to sustain our minds when such desolating tidings were bursting over them, than the remarkable one which I have read, in which the apostle consoles his Hebrew converts under the death of their ministers, and some of them by the hand of violence, and exhorts them not to be moved away from the hope of the gospel, on the ground of the immutability of that Saviour in whose faith their pastors lived and died, and whose presence and authority in the Church remained unalterably the same.

For this appears to be the import of his declaration of the great mystery which forms the argument of the passage, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"—that is, *Jesus Christ is the same, remaineth, continueth the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*—a periphrasis to express the divine and incommunicable attribute of unchangeableness of being. It resembles other descriptions of our Lord. He it is who is "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end"—He it is "which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." He it is who is "the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father"—the Father or possessor of everlasting existence. "He continueth ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood." "He is the same, and his years do not fail." He is the "I AM," the self-existing, self-dependent, unchangeable Being.

As Christ then is immutable—such is the apostle's reasoning—so the Hebrews were not to yield to change in the profession of his gospel, nor to be "carried about with divers and strange doctrines," when their ministers were taken from them; but, on the contrary,

were to “remember them” with affection, as those who “had had the rule over them, and spoken to them the word of God;” and to follow their faith, “considering” the happy “end of their” life and “conversation” among them; that thus their hearts might still be established and settled on the unalterable grace and power of Christ, for the continued preservation and care of his Church, though the persons of pastors were so often changing by reason of death.

The subject therefore to be considered is, The unchangeableness of Christ the consolation of the Church under the loss of eminent pastors—which may be viewed, agreeably to the apostle’s order, with reference to the close of their conversation; to the instructions they delivered; and to the desolating void occasioned by their removal—and in each view may be opposed to the dejection which might otherwise arise.

For to the grief arising from their brief and sudden end of life, may be opposed the unchangeableness of Christ in his being and grace—to the dismay springing from the termination of their instructions, and the consequent fear of the unsteadiness of the flocks, may be opposed the unchangeableness of Christ in the never-dying and unalterable truth of his gospel—whilst to the sorrow arising from their removal, and the apparent impossibility of supplying their loss, may be opposed the same view of Christ in his never-failing though inscrutable providence, and his unvarying wisdom and love.

I. The immutability of Christ is a source of consolation, when we reflect *on the close, often brief and*



*sudden, of our departed brethren's life and conversation.*

“Remember them that have the rule over you”—“considering the end of their conversation”—weighing well, deliberately, regarding the conversation and manner of life in which they continued till the last hour. In this sense of the word, the apostle appeals to the elders of Ephesus, “Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind and many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable, but have shewed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house”—such was St. Paul’s conversation in Asia.

And when the Hebrew Christians considered attentively the whole character of their deceased pastors, their going in and out amongst them, their gentleness, their love for souls, their fidelity, their diligence, they would have the testimony within themselves that their whole life sprung from faith in the person and grace of Christ, and that when they were removed by whatever event, whether by martyrdom, or by ordinary sickness, or by the gradual decay of life, Christ remaining the same, would console and strengthen his Church.

It is thus in every age that the conversation of the faithful minister bears the stamp of Christ. His flock know his demeanour, his walk, his manner of life, his object, the character which Christianity has impressed upon him—for Christianity impresses a character, and if it does not do this, it does nothing. It is not merely the ecclesiastical duties, it is not merely the solemn

sermons stately delivered, it is the conversation preceding and following those sacred offices—the character, which leaves the right impression upon the hearts of the people.

And then the termination, however sudden, crowns the whole. The apostle directs our attention especially to the *end* of their conversation, the conclusion of their course, and the manner in which they departed out of the world, the composure with which they looked forward to death, and received the stroke of it with whatever circumstances it was attended.

He probably had in his view St. Stephen, the first martyr; the apostle James, the brother of John, slain by Herod; James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and all others from the beginning of the gospel, who either had fallen in the cause of Christ, or had been otherwise removed from them.

Now if they watched and fixed their closest attention on the end and event of such holy characters—if they marked their steadiness through afflictions, imprisonment, banishment, and death—their joy, their self-possession, their forgiveness of their persecutors, the happy manner in which they quitted life, the support they found in their latest moments from the truths which they had taught them, the heroic resolution with which some of them were animated to meet even martyrdom itself in the sacred cause, they would be so far from sinking in their minds, or from turning aside to new and strange doctrines as if the gospel could not sustain them, that they would rather be encouraged to greater boldness in the faith, they would conclude that what Christ had been to their ministers in time past, the

same would he be to the surviving flocks in the time then present, and the same to those who serve him through all ages with undiminished energy.

It is not easy to imagine to what a degree the faith of St. Stephen, for instance, in the end of his conversation would encourage the surviving Church. The eye fixed on heaven—the glory of God unveiled—Jesus standing on the right hand of God—the intercession for his murderers at the instant when they were perpetrating their cruel purpose—the solemn act of prayer in which he committed his departing soul to his Saviour, “Lord Jesus receive my spirit”—all this must have consoled those “devout men who carried him to his burial,” “great as the lamentation” would be which they would make over him. Such an end of a preceding life and conversation, was a triumphant attestation to the grace of Christ, whose unchangeableness they knew would remain undiminished to the end of time.

But the word here rendered *end*, has something in it emphatical—it has the meaning of an event, a final issue, an exit accompanied with a deliverance from difficulties; such a termination as brings a rescue, an unexpected rescue perhaps, from perplexity and suffering. It is the same word as is used by the apostle in the only other place where it occurs, and which we there render, “a way of escape.” “There hath no temptation taken you, but what is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way for escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” Death to the faithful servant of God is a

deliverance from the trials and sorrows of life, an escape to the repose and happiness of heaven.

As the Israelites when flying from Egypt, and entangled, as Pharaoh prematurely boasted, in the wilderness, seemed to have no possibility of escape—but, lo, the Red sea opened before them at the Divine command, and stood up like a wall on either side whilst they passed over: so the Christian pilgrim seems at times surrounded by afflictions and difficulties, and no path of safety any where appears—but, lo, death opens “a way of escape” to a heavenly home. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”

I appeal to all before me whether the life and conversation of the deceased and honored Bishop of Madras were not eminently of the nature I have now been describing. He was no stranger to you. During thirty years ye “knew the man and his communication.” Ye knew the meekness, silence, gentleness of his character. It was not one or two good actions, one or two benevolent words, one or two pious discourses—it was his whole life, his conversation. Christianity had stamped her fairest character upon him. There is not a man in India, however sceptical or careless himself, that does not acknowledge the excellency of Corrie’s whole life and behaviour among us. And how eminently becoming his profession was the end of his conversation, I need not say; the resignation with which he bowed to the Divine will in the loss of his beloved wife only six weeks before his own departure; the work in which death found

him—every accent that fell from him during his brief illness.

Be not therefore distressed beyond measure. All is not lost. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. You may confide in him. Be not moved away from the truth of the gospel, because a chief pastor is gone, but let your hearts be established in the grace of Christ. Stand firm. Christ will support you in every difficulty, even as he has supported him who has so happily for himself finished his course. “Run with patience” the remaining race set before you, “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher”—the immutable author and finisher—“of your faith.”

In the flux and uncertainty of mortal things all is, indeed, changing around us—ministers are changing, friends changing, prospects changing—India is the place of sudden change, separation and bereavement; but Christ changes not. He is a fixed and unmoved rock, the “Rock of ages,” on which he that buildeth shall never be confounded—he shall share the immoveableness of the Saviour to whom he adheres. The more apparent the variableness of man, the more blessed the immutability of Christ. And it is in this very comparison that the apostle uses the doctrine in the commencement of the epistle. “To the Son he saith,”—“Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thine hands; they shall perish, but THOU REMAINEST;

1 It was at a meeting of the Madras Diocesan Committee for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts, that he was seized with the illness which proved his last.

and they all shall wax old as doth a garment ; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed : but THOU ART THE SAME, AND THY YEARS SHALL NOT FAIL."

II. But the immutability of Christ is further the consolation of the Church under the loss of eminent pastors, *if we advert to the termination of their instructions, and the consequent fear of the unsteadiness of the flocks*—"Remember them," saith the apostle, "that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow—be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines ; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." It is in the midst of these exhortations, that he inserts the great truth we are considering as the motive to the whole. Let this unchangeableness of Christ console you, as though the apostle had said, under the suspension of the rule and instructions of your beloved pastors. The gospel of Christ is immutable like himself. His word cannot fail. He ever liveth to sustain his own truth in his Church. Remember, then, your departed ministers' rule over you, adhere to their doctrine, imitate their faith, be stedfast in the grace which is in Christ Jesus ; for in him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

1. We are to *remember, then, with affection the paternal rule and guidance* they were entrusted with over us, and be ready to yield the same cheerful and reasonable obedience to those who may succeed them. As the apostle enjoins in the 17th verse, "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves,

for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." Rulers there ever are in the Church of God. We are to obey them whilst living; we are to remember them when dead; we are to receive them who may succeed to their sacred offices; because the presence and authority of Christ in his gospel, remains imperishably and unchangeably the same. God is a God of order. All nature is in obedience to his law. His will controls, directs, regulates all. In civil society we are to "obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." In religious society we are to obey them that rule over us. "The term here employed," says Dr. Barrow, "is very significant and proper, as fully implying the nature of their charge, the qualification of their persons, their rank and privileges in the Church, together consequently with the grounds of the obligation to the correspondent duties towards them. There are in Scripture divers names and phrases appropriate to them, each of them denoting some eminent part of their office, or some appurtenance thereof. But this term of leader, guide, or captain, seemeth of all most comprehensive, so that unto it all the rest are well reducible. The persons intended are primarily the Bishops, as the superior or chief guides, each in his place according to order peaceably established; then, secondarily, the Presbyters or Priests in their station as guides inferior, together with their Deacons or assistants. Such the Church always hath had; and such by God's blessing our Church now hath, towards whom the duty of obedience is to be performed."

Thus in their different orders the Ministers of Christ lead, conduct, go before their flocks in spiritual things—guide them as a captain guides and encourages his soldiers, in the combat against sin, Satan, and the world.

Presbyters, assisted by their Deacons, are guides and rulers in their separate flocks—they celebrate public prayers and sacraments, they read and preach the word of God, they exclude by mild discipline the impenitent and unruly from holy mysteries, they admit the contrite, they check divers and strange doctrines if they arise, they shun and avoid heresies and divisions, they promote peace and charity amongst brethren, they visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, they seek out the wandering sheep, they catechise the young, “they feed the flock of God which is among them, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock”—and this because “the chief Shepherd” is immutably the same, and when he “shall appear, they shall receive from Him the crown of glory which fadeth not away.”

Those, again, who like the Apostles, and Timothy and Titus, and the Angels of the Asiatic Churches, are of the higher order, are guides of pastors, as well as of flocks,—to ordain elders or presbyters in every city—to charge them that they teach no other doctrine—to found new Churches—to confirm the young in the name of the Lord—to preserve unity and peace, and decide controversies—to guard the deposit of the faith—to exercise jurisdiction in the Lord’s house—



“to set in order the things that are wanting,” and arrange those thousand indifferent matters which are not expressly detailed in God’s holy Word, but which are yet necessary to be settled for the sake of peace, on the apostle’s general canon, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

In what manner our departed brother fulfilled this office, I need not observe. His meek figure is now before me—his gentle voice—his benevolent eye, his winning deportment. It is almost inconceivable, how far in the brief space of his bishopric he had won all hearts to his mild rule, and conciliated universal esteem to the Church and her offices in his new and extensive diocese. I need not say, “Remember him that had the rule over you”—he is written on your hearts—you never can forget such a man.

2. Nor will you fail to *adhere to the truth of the gospel which he spake*—this was his main object. For this end the rule was entrusted to him. And therefore on this part of the character the stress is laid in our text, “Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God.” This is the only thing specified—as the great point. Now we come to the very interior of the Christian religion. The rule of her ministers over their flocks is founded on the word of God, derives thence its authority, is regulated by it, has it for its object and end, is entirely subordinate to it. According to this they are to “watch for souls as those that must give account.”

“The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ,” this is the

substance of Revelation, of all its discoveries and all its authority; its discoveries, the mystery of peace in the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ; its authority, as being the word or message not of man, nor by man, but of God himself. This constitutes "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." Connected with this are many preparatory and consequent truths; the inconceivable guilt of sin—the holiness of the Divine law—the corruption of man's nature—the mystery of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for ever—the atonement and propitiation of Christ's death—justification by faith only—the operations of God's Holy Spirit in regenerating and sanctifying the heart—holy love to God and man—the interior, spiritual life—the ten commandments—a righteous, upright, benevolent life and conversation. .

This word comprehends indeed the entire revelation of the Bible in its bearing, proportion, relative influence, designs.

This word is to be read in solemn services, opened and expounded in public sermons, and more familiarly unfolded in private conferences, in conversation, in lectures.

How meekly and wisely Bishop Corrie spake the word of God to you, it is superfluous for me to describe. No man ever more faithfully desired to be clear of the blood of all men. His voice was never strong, nor his nerves of late years firm for great public exertions, but his tender care for souls, his simple and affectionate discharge of his office as a steward of God's word and sacraments were most edifying. In private conference he had a peculiar talent in engaging the

confidence of the young, and opening to them the word of God. When he entered on his episcopate it was in the same spirit as he had discharged for thirty years his functions as presbyter. His first sermon at Madras was from these words, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

3. *Follow, then, imitate, imbid, copy out his faith*—that divine principle of repose and trust in the promises of God in Christ Jesus, "which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; by which the elders obtained a good report; by which Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; by which Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went; by which Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

This divine principle, first receiving the general testimony of God in Holy Scripture, produces true repentance and contrition of heart before God. Then, embracing the special revelation of mercy in Christ Jesus, relies on that for pardon, justification, and eternal life.

And, lastly, taking the whole of Scripture as inspired and unalterable truth, uses every part for the purpose for which it was made known: its own sincerity being evidenced by good works, by which a living faith may be discerned, even as a tree is known by its fruit.

Our departed brother was eminent in this grace. Nothing moved him. He pursued one even tenor of his way, till the very end of his conversation amongst us. Follow then his faith. Let the unchangeableness of Christ, who was the great object of it, lead you

to continue stedfast, rooted and grounded, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel. Though your ministers change, let not your faith.

4. *And this leads to stability.* Then will your "heart be established with grace, and not be carried about with divers and strange doctrines." For even in the apostolic age many innovations had been brought in amongst the Hebrews, by different descriptions of false teachers, as amongst the Philippians, Galatians, and Corinthians; especially by Judaizing doctors, who insisted on "meats," as the apostle notes in the words following the text, "which had not profited them that were exercised therein." These teachers pretend in every age to be angels of light, but are, in truth, ministers of darkness. They present one of the main temptations to that fickleness of temper which commonly ends in apostacy. Thus the hearts of the young are not established with grace, are not strengthened in the faith; and instead of "standing fast in the Lord," who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," are as "children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."

It is one of the manifest advantages of our apostolical Anglican Church that she forms a bulwark against rash innovations. Her Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies are the fixed and unwavering standard of the truth, derived by our Reformers from the Scriptures themselves, and purified from all the doubtful and superstitious and erroneous admixtures of the dark ages. She is a pillar and ground of the truth.

The singular constancy and steadiness of our late friend is known to all. What he was in his doctrines

and faith when he landed in India, that he was when he came to the end of his conversation. He never entered into controversy. He was never carried away by any novelty. His heart was eminently established with grace.

I oppose, then, to the excessive sorrow arising from the termination of his instructions, and to the consequent fear of the unsteadiness of the flocks, the unchangeableness of Christ in his never-dying truth. Men indeed die, and with them the particular instructions they delivered. But the discipline and rule of Christ's Church, the word of God, the faith of the gospel, the grace which settles the heart, die not. "The voice said, Cry; and he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass and all the glory of man as a flower of the field; the grass withereth and the flower thereof fadeth away; but THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURETH FOR EVER, and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Thus then consolation flows copiously from the unchangeableness of Christ, both as regards their brief and sudden termination of life, and the close of their instructions; but what shall we say, when we come to speak,

*III. Of the dismay arising from the apparent impossibility of supplying their loss.* I still oppose to this the same view of the unchangeableness of Christ, and I call on you to believe simply on his never-failing, though inscrutable Providence, and his immutable wisdom and love.

It is true, the loss is great, and humanly speaking irreparable. It is true we can least of all bear the

removal of a minister of the gentle and tender spirit of Corrie. It is true the desolating feelings occasioned by his removal from the superintendence and charge of such a diocese are overwhelming. It is true nothing can, so far as we can see, soon fill up the sorrowful void.

1. But let us remember that it is for such *very occasions that the sublime mystery of the text is introduced*. It is for the very purpose that the Church should not faint under the apparent impossibility of supplying the place of eminent pastors, that the apostle casts us on the never-changing power and grace of Christ. It was for a similar end, also, that our Lord himself assured his disconsolate disciples, that it was "expedient for them that he should go away; that he was going to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was; that he would come again and receive them unto himself; and that because he lived, they should live also."

And was it not in a like view that, after giving the commission to "go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," he left the promise with his Church, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world?" Shall we despond, then, when the very case occurs for which the inspired records prepared these sublime declarations? Is not Christ with us still? Has he changed since the time when he first made them? What he was then, is he not to-day, and will he not be for ever? Cannot he fill up any void? Cannot he repair any loss? Is any thing too hard for the Lord?

2. We are to consider, also, that departed ministers, however eminent, *were but instruments qualified and*

*employed by Him*, who remains the same to raise up and bless others. One channel is indeed cut off, but the ever-living fountain flows still. A rivulet is exhausted, but the mighty ocean of grace is deep and wide as ever. "Who is Paul and who is Apollos" in this view, "but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? Paul hath planted, Apollos hath watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

Jesus Christ "holdeth the stars in his right hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." He is the "Head of the body, the Church." To Him "all power is given in heaven and earth;" "He hath ascended on high and led captivity captive, and given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,"—and will he desert his Church?

3. *Perhaps, also, if we honored more habitually His unchangeableness*, and reposed more simply on him for the prosperity of the Church, we might be spared many of our losses. The removal of eminent pastors at very critical junctures may be designed to humble us, and to chasten us, and to quicken us in prayer to him in this very view.

We all profess to rely on this blessing of Christ. We all profess to look through and beyond means, to the invisible presence and spirit of the Saviour. But we are prone to be "carnal and walk as men." We are apt to say, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas." We are prone to mistake feelings of respect or affection for grace, excitement for faith,

passing emotions for piety. We are led away by habit, cast of mind, earthly preferences, private ends, fickleness, prejudices. Public Service is a friendship, instead of an act of devout communion with our God. We soon forget our real dependence upon Christ; we form little plans of our own; we think we have contrived and arranged every thing; we "settle on our lees," as the prophet speaks.

These abruptions therefore tear us from creature-confidence, recall us to our principles, quicken us in prayer, cast us on the rock of the Divine faithfulness, bring us immediately before our unchangeable Saviour, as our only hope.

If the deaths of our Bishops in India are not enough, a fifth shall carry on the lesson, and compel us to feel that we have "the treasure indeed in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man."

4. The same consideration should *sustain us under the delays which may occur in the supply of our loss and the answer of our prayers.* The apostle speaks of our Lord in this particular character, his unchangeableness, in opposition to the hurry and perturbation the Hebrews might fall into at the sudden removal of eminent guides. We soon despond. We soon become impatient if any thing is not as we could wish it to be, and as soon as we could wish it to be. Now Christ is not in a hurry, like man. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness." The times and seasons are not for us to know.



Redemption is a long economy, stretching through all ages, with various divisions, and different measures of progress, under the conduct of infinite wisdom.

It is a consolation to know that Christ "ever liveth to make intercession for us," that "from everlasting to everlasting he is God," and "that a thousand years in his sight are but as yesterday when it is passed, and as a watch in the night."

5. We may be comforted also by remembering, that *the unchangeableness of our Lord is only one amongst his many Divine perfections*. It is the stamp and seal, indeed, of all the rest, but is itself only one among the number. Whatever his Divine attributes are revealed to be in Holy Scripture, add to them this property of immutability, and you have the just conception of his character.

Is he infinite in wisdom, then he is unchangeably wise. Is he infinite in love, then he is unchangeably gracious. Is he infinite in power, in justice, in truth, in purity, then he is unchangeably so.

He is the immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Saviour.

Whatever he was from eternity in the unity of the Father and the Holy Spirit, that he is now, and that he will be for ever. Whatever he was on earth as man and Mediator, whatever character he then displayed in estimating persons and things, whatever abhorrence of the proud Pharisee and regard to the humble publican he then testified, that he is without alteration now, and that he will continue till the consummation of all things. Every human being will find him at the day of judgment precisely what he was here below.

Nor will any abide the day of his coming to judge the world, except those whom he would have received when a man of sorrows upon earth.

This thought suggests a most important practical consideration. If Christ changes not, then all the hopes of sinners continuing impenitent and obstinate, are in vain—then those who think God altogether such an one as themselves, are indulging a fruitless expectation. Christ changes not. The sinner must return to him in true contrition, in order to obtain pardon and grace. If Christ changes not, the unholy, and the worldly and the impure must be converted if ever they are to dwell with him.

Your heart, sinner, must be renewed by the sanctifying operations of the Spirit, if ever you enter heaven. If Christ changes not, there is no hope of escape if you die in your sins.

Repent then and believe the gospel. Enter on the indispensable change from sin to righteousness; approach Christ for life, seek salvation, call upon Him.

“The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are not of the Father but of the world; and the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he,” and he alone, “that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.”

6. Let us lastly be consoled with the thought, that whilst all Divine perfections are thus unchangeably found in our Lord, *his compassion is the characteristic and prevailing one*—which is the very attribute we most need to sustain and strengthen our hearts under

sorrow. "We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; for in that he himself suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Whatever privation he calls us to, whatever losses we sustain, whatever difficulties we are encompassed by, doubt not the tenderest compassion of Christ. He is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever in his pity. The same heart that felt for the sorrows of the woman of Syrophænicia, the same sympathy that wept at the grave of Lazarus and over the approaching fall of Jerusalem, the same tenderness which raised the son of the widow of Nain, remains unchangeably the same.

Let us cast ourselves then on this immutable Saviour. Let us not doubt for a moment his faithfulness and love. Let us wait for the Lord, as they that watch for the morning. Let us be assured that he who loved the Church and gave himself for it, loves it with undiminished energy. Light will arise from darkness. All is under, not only an infinitely wise, but an infinitely gracious guidance.

Several alleviating circumstances occur in the death of our honored and beloved brother. He was not removed from us till *after a long period of service, and when from a gradual decay of health his work might appear nearly accomplished.* He had been thirty years in India, a period which very, very few Europeans reach. Still fewer have had so long and honorable a course of service. As chaplain at Chunar, Cawnpore, Agra, Benares, and the cathedral at Calcutta, he

was long a blessing to his various flocks. As Arch-deacon, for nine years he fulfilled the duties of that difficult office; and thrice was he called to the episcopal residence, to supply as far as he was able, for considerable intervals, the functions of the vacant See.<sup>1</sup>

We are to remember, also, with gratitude, that during this long period he *exhibited that peculiar cast of character which India most wanted*. With all the sweetness of Bishop Heber, he had all the enlightened hold of Christianity and fixed simplicity of heart of Brainerd and Swartz and Henry Martyn. His cast of mind was humility, meekness, gentleness. To this he added such generosity as kept him continually a beggar so to speak, from the unlimited munificence of his benefactions. There was nothing he was not ready to attempt and to execute, if possible, from his own funds. Wherever I passed during the Visitation in the places where he had resided, Corrie's was the name constantly repeated. Corrie built the church and founded the mission at Chunar. Corrie built the chapel and school-house at Agra. Corrie built the two churches at Benares, and founded, or caused to be founded, the schools. At Buxar also it was the same. What he did in founding the High School at Calcutta, what as respected the Free church, what in Mrs. Wilson's female schools, what at Mirzapore, what in the Church Missionary and Bible Society Committees—you all know.

His accessibility, also, his kindness to the young, his gentleness in reproof, his charitable judgment of

<sup>1</sup> After the deaths of Bishops Heber, James, and Turner.

others, his forgiveness of injuries, shed a soft brightness on this generosity of heart, which attached both Natives and Europeans to him with an indescribable attachment. Every one feels that he has lost a father, a brother, a friend. I am not drawing a poetical picture of imagined perfection. No doubt he had his infirmities; but they arose so entirely on the side of softness of nature as to deduct little from the general weight of his character. He might often be imposed upon—he might be wanting in habits of despatch in business—he might be irresolute and forgetful—he might be susceptible sometimes of prejudices which sunk the deeper into his feelings, because he said little. But all this is nothing. Had his particular errors of judgment been a thousand times more numerous than they were, they would have been lost in the just admiration and love which a consistent, simple, benevolent, gentle spirit had excited during a life in India of thirty years. Such a character is more precious than gold. The bold, the vigorous, the unbending, if adorned with piety, are deserving of admiration, and are in certain periods of essential service; but the meek, the amiable, the silent are more rare and more blessed.

We are again to remember with gratitude that he *united in an eminent degree the Missionary and the Chaplain*. He was the last of that fine series of men with whom India was blessed in the last age. He stands on the same list with Brown, Buchanan, Martyn, Tommason, who were the ornaments of the Anglican Episcopal Church in India before the creation of the See. He gave himself so early and so assiduously to

the cultivation of the native languages, that in Hindoostanee he was a very superior scholar—wrote it with elegance, and spoke it with ease. He had a Missionary's heart. Wherever he resided as a Chaplain, he founded and sustained Missions. The first eminent Bishop of Calcutta, mentions his labours at Agra, where Abdool Messeeh was his distinguished convert, with commendation. He was the parent of the Church Missionary Society in India, the centre of union, the soul of all its operations. And when he went home for his health in 1814, I well remember the affection with which he was every where welcomed. There is no one who filled at the period of his death so large a space in the public mind, both here and at home as Corrie, from the juncture when he lived, the length of his services, the cast of his character, and his union of the Missionary's and Chaplain's spirit. Confidence had gathered round him gradually, and from all quarters, and all classes of persons, and was rapidly increasing.

Nor must we forget the great goodness of God in raising him to the *See of the newly founded Diocese of Madras*. Never did India feel a warmer joy than when she knew that her beloved Corrie was distinguished with this just mark of favour by the home government. He was sent out by the FIRST CHARLES GRANT; he was made Bishop by THE SECOND.<sup>1</sup> He would indeed have been appointed Bishop of Calcutta in 1832, had not his distance from England and the uncertainty of life prevented. When he ascended

<sup>1</sup> When President of the India Board—now Lord Glenelg.

then the episcopal chair of Madras, it was with the acclamations of all classes. Nor did he disappoint the high expectation formed of him. Never was a ruler in the house of God ~~so~~ beloved. Never did any one more successfully unite firmness in principle with suavity of spirit. The burst of grief throughout the Diocese at his early death, is indescribable. His sermons, his addresses at confirmation, his activity in founding a grammar school, and a society for building churches, his correspondence with his Clergy, his settlement of doubtful cases, his zeal in Missionary and benevolent institutions—his simplicity in all he did, had won every heart.

It is true all these considerations augment our loss, and seem to deepen the dejection which our text is designed to dissipate. But they are topics of gratitude notwithstanding to the Author of all good, and they are testimonies also of what our unchangeable Redeemer will do for India if we wait upon him. We could not expect to detain Corrie from his reward, his rest, his crown. We might have wished—I confess I had myself wished and hoped—that ten or fifteen years more of life might have been granted to him—that he might have been translated to Calcutta and presided over the Indian Dioceses with the mild and powerful weight of accumulated experience and age—I had hoped that the rougher natures of Bishops and Presbyters might have learned lessons of sweetness from his lips—but we bow before inscrutable Wisdom. When God's will is once known in the events of his Providence, we must, and do, and will believe that all is right.

Yes, blessed saint, thy change has taken place. Thou art no longer amongst us. Thy frail body is saying to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm thou art my kinsman. Yes, thy venerable form, thy lofty figure, thy gentle voice is no longer amongst us. But JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER. He never changeth. Thou art with Him now in felicity; and at the last trump thy mortal remains shall be gathered, thy corruptible shall put on incorruption, thy body of dishonour and earth and decay shall become a honorable and spiritual and immortal one “like unto Christ’s glorious body, according to his mighty power which is able to subdue all things unto himself.” In the mean time, we will consider well thy conversation, crowned by its blessed end and termination—we will remember thee amongst those that have had the rule over us—we will adhere to thy instructions from the word of God—we will follow thy faith—we will labour to settle and establish our hearts in the grace of our unchangeable Saviour.

And, do Thou, O merciful Lord, cast the bright beams of Thy light upon Thy Church in India, that it being enlightened with the doctrine and labours of a succession of thy servants such as him whom Thou hast removed from us, may so walk in the light of thy truth, that it may at length come to the light of everlasting life.









